


SORCERY
AND
RELIGION
IN ANCIENT SCANDINAVIA



VARG VIKERNES

 ABSTRACT SOUNDS BOOKS LTD

Published by Abstract Sounds Books Ltd.
Unit 207 Buspace Studios, Conlan Street, London W10 5AP, England
www.abstractsoundspublishing.com

First edition.

© Abstract Sounds Books Ltd., 2011

Text © Varg Vikernes, 2011

The moral right of the author has been asserted.

All rights reserved.

Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the prior written permission of the copyright holder.

Special Edition Hardback - ABSB041

ISBN: 978-0-9566959-2-5

Standard Edition Paperback - ABSB042

ISBN: 978-0-9566959-3-2

SORCERY AND RELIGION IN ANCIENT SCANDINAVIA

VARG VIKERNES



CONTENTS

Prologue	6
1.0 From the dim Mist of Antiquity	
1.1 Animism	8
1.2 Sorcery	10
1.3 Religion	14
1.4 The Mistletoe	16
1.5 The Matriarchy	20
1.6 The Patriarchy	24
2.0 The Calendar Woman	
2.1 The Sun's Calendar	26
2.2 The Mysteries	30
3.0 The Divine Secrets	
3.1 The Runes	52
3.2 Freyr's Group of eight	54
3.3 Hagall's Group of eight	56
3.4 Týr's Group of eight	58
4.0 Völuspá	
4.1 The Prophecy of the Sorceress	60
4.2 Freyr's First Group of eight	62
4.3 Hagall's First Group of eight	66
4.4 Týr's First Group of eight	68
4.5 Freyr's Second Group of eight	74
4.6 Hagall's Second Group of eight	80
4.7 Týr's Second Group of eight	86
4.8 Freyr's Third Group of eight	90
4.9 Hagall's Third Group of eight	94
4.10 Týr's Third Group of eight	100
5.0 The Mystery Chamber	
5.1 The Hiding Place of the Dead	102
6.0 The Voice of the Forefathers	
6.1 The Eggjum Stone	106
6.2 Ívarr Ellison	110
6.3 The Love of the Grave	114
Epilogue	120
Name Index	122

PROLOGUE

This book is written as an attempt to describe the traditions and beliefs of the Ancient Europeans. I have studied the subject for almost two decades and yet I can only list two books about this subject, *The Golden Bough*, by the anthropologist Sir James Frazer, and *Fedrekult i Norge* ("Ancestral Cult in Norway"), by the missionary and historian Otto Emil Birkeli, as any real help when writing this book. I have been forced to look for answers mainly in the etymology and original texts, but also in old fairy tales, traditional songs and Norwegian folklore.

My hypotheses in this book are based on the claim that all the tribes of Ancient Europe originally had the same religion, whether they lived in Europe or had emigrated to North-Africa or different parts of Asia. Even though the deities, myths and traditions discussed in this book generally speaking are Scandinavian, it does not mean they are only Scandinavian. I am describing common Ancient European beliefs.

I assume that the reader of this book is already familiar with the Scandinavian mythology, and will ask from you that you open your mind and accept that much of what you think you know already is in fact not correct. The common perception of Baldr and Bragi being two separate deities for example is wrong; they are just different names for the same deity. When you encounter such apparent "mistakes" made by me you need to accept them as correct, and keep reading until you realise that my interpretation is in fact correct. If you encounter a translation of a word or name that you think is wrong, or that your dictionary (or lecturer) claims is wrong, you need to do better research and find out what other dictionaries (and/or lecturers) have to say about this. They don't always agree. Also, remember that the Norse language was not a language with a clear orthography. What this means is that sometimes my translation *may* seem to be wrong, but *can* be seen as correct if you just change the spelling of the translated word. We know many names from different Norse sources, and these different sources use a different spelling; Nárfi is for example some times spelled Nörvi. I always use the translation that makes the most sense, although some times other translations are also possible – and I often include all possible translations.

Academics tend to disregard every book written without references to specific sources. This book is probably such a book, but I have to defend it by saying that I cannot list sources when the ideas are my own, the interpretations my own and

the conclusions my own. You only need an open mind and common sense to appreciate the contents of this book, and hopefully this means that a few academics as well might appreciate it.

The sorcery and religion in ancient Europe is the foundation on which our culture and civilisation was built. We see traces of this all around us, in everything we do, build and surround ourselves with, and not least in ourselves. It is about time that we realise and appreciate this.

The language in this book is my second language, so especially native English speakers will have to bear with me.

Varg Vikernes
November 2007
Tromsø, Norway

1.0 FROM THE DIM MIST OF ANTIQUITY



Image of Danish Burial Mound, by unknown Artist.

1.1 Animism

The Stone Age man was as intelligent as we are today, but he knew virtually nothing about the world in which he lived. Everything that took place around him, even the most trivial of things, was very frightening, or at best, incomprehensible. He did not know why the Sun rose and shone on the sky, why the Sun set and disappeared in the evening, or even what the Sun was. He did not know why the clouds appeared above him or why it started to rain. He did not know why or how women became pregnant, or why winter came. He did not have any understanding of time, of how long an hour, a day, a week, a month or a year lasted. Because of that he did not know for how long the Sun would be gone when it sat in the west, or for how long the winter would last.

The Sun was the most important entity to the Stone Age man. It gave him light so he could see well enough to gather food, along with the rain it was what made nature green and fertile, leaving an abundance of edible growths, and it gave warmth so he did not freeze to death. The periods when the Sun was gone or had lost its strength was therefore characterized by fear. What would happen to him? Would the Sun ever return and grow strong again? He did not know. He did not understand why the Sun was born in the east, why it flew across the sky and then sank into the ocean and died in the west. What could possibly make this shiny ball move across the sky? He could not see anything pulling or pushing the Sun, so obviously invisible forces in the air were responsible. The only known invisible force able to move other objects like that was the wind. It could grow so strong it would tear up entire trees from the ground and toss them about. It was certainly strong enough to move that bright ball up there in the sky as well!

The wind was closely related to the breath of man, which could also be used to move tiny objects, like feathers and leaves, around. It was therefore natural for the Stone Age man to assume that the wind was made up of spirits flying in the air, and that they controlled the movement of the Sun.

Note to the English version:

In the original Norwegian version of this book the similarity of the words "breath" (No. *ånde*) and "spirit" (No. *ånd*) is used to show where we have the idea of "spirits" from. I can add that the Latin *spiritus* also originally translates as "breath", to make it clear that this is not a coincidence in the Norwegian language.

The spirits were invisible and powerful, and he assumed that they were responsible for all the incomprehensible forces of nature. They manipulated the rain from the clouds, thunder and lightning, nature's power of growth, and everything else. He realised – or rather assumed – that it was all associated with the spirits.

The next thing to do for him was to find out how he could influence the spirits, so that they gave him what he needed, first and foremost Sunlight, rain and fertility, when he wanted and needed it.

1.2 Sorcery

By studying nature the Stone Age man learnt that the lightning struck the trees and sometimes ignited them. Lightning was always followed by the thunder in the sky, and the fire was very similar to the Sun. It warmed them and lit up their surroundings just like the Sun did, even in the darkest winter nights. He therefore assumed that the fire had been transferred from Heaven to Earth and that it was stored inside the trees. The challenge was to extract the fire from the wood exactly at the moment when he needed it.

When he in his everyday life made different tools out of flint small sparks appeared and fell to the ground, just like the lightning did from the sky. He therefore assumed that this was what happened in the sky as well; mighty spirits struck huge stones against each other, so that lightning occurred and hit the trees, igniting them. He at some point figured that if he did the same he would achieve the same result. When he did the sparks from the stones came into contact with dry wood, and when he used his breath (spirit!) and blew on the tiny embers they some times turned into a live and sparkling fire! *Eureka!* Ecstatic and amazed the Stone Age man had discovered how to make a fire, by imitating the spirits in the sky! This was a major breakthrough and had a great impact on the shaping of the Stone Age mentality. Could this apply to all the forces of nature?

He studied nature further and discovered that the frogs croaked shortly before the rain started to fall. Was this a signal to or from the spirits? When imitating the spirits in the sky he had managed to make a fire, so in order to make it rain whenever he wanted to he could catch some frogs and make them croak, usually by killing them. He did and it worked. After killing frogs it really started to rain. Eventually anyway.

Note:

I may add that when I was a kid in Bergen/Norway we were told by the adults not to kill or torment frogs, because if we did, the adults claimed, "it would start to rain". According to them the same applied to black snails. If we stepped on them it would start to rain.

He also saw that when berries from the bushes fell to the ground they turned into bushes themselves. Ergo the Earth's fertility was transferred by contact. The Stone Age man had no idea it was actually the sexual intercourse that made the women pregnant, so in order to make them pregnant he began to transfer the Earth's fertility to them, by flogging their behinds with birch twigs in the spring,

when nature was at it's most fertile, by letting the Sun shine upon them and by letting the rain fall upon them. It did not end there, though; if he wanted a person to keep a promise he could ask him to stand on or hold onto a rock when he made the promise, so that the promise would be as strong and firm as the rock. He could also hold onto a ring, so that the loyalty was without an end. He could even catch animals by thrusting his spear into the animal tracks when he came across them, to injure it's leg, making it easier to catch.

With time the sorcery became more and more comprehensive. In the end the Stone Age man had spells covering just about everything in nature, and the idea of sorcery permeated his life. When men died it was logical to bury them in the ground, so that they would come back one day, like the berries and seeds when they were planted in the soil. The Earth was seen as feminine, because the plants emerged from her womb just like children from the womb of the woman. For the dead to return all the Stone Age woman had to do was to touch the dead in the grave, or touch something he had been in contact with. She then had to be made fertile, as described above. When the woman then gave birth to a child the newborn was given the dead person's name and was regarded as the same person as the one in the grave. Because the dead had no memories of his past lives it was assumed that he had forgotten all about this in the realm of the dead.

Note:

This naturally explains why we still have the custom in most parts of Europe of naming our children after their grandparents.

The Sun disappeared into the ocean in the west, and was assumed to travel by boat at that point, through the realm of the dead below the surface of the Earth. It then reappeared in the east, after completing its journey. Man was a part of nature, just like everything else, so the Stone Age man assumed that he too had to travel through the underworld when he died, by boat across the ocean or a vast river, before being reborn again, by a woman. He assumed that it was this trip that made him forget. When the Stone Age man died he was because of this given a boat funeral, or he was placed in a grave shaped like a boat. Some times he was buried inland along with a horse instead, if the sea was too far away and the Sun set over land. The dead were buried on Sunset the first Sunday after the first full Moon after death, because on this day they would have the company of the Sun and the waning (dying) Moon, on their journey into the dark and cold realm beneath the surface of the Earth.

One would think that intelligent human beings, like our forefathers were, would very quickly realize that their sorcery did not work, but if a sorcerer killed frogs and it actually started to rain afterwards it was not easy to know that his spell had nothing to do with this. Perhaps it didn't start to rain right away, but sooner or later it would, and when it did the sorcerer could take the credit for having caused this effect. Besides, since man was so fearful of all things it would take a lot of courage not to trust the sorcerers as well. What if the rain would never fall again, the Sun never shine and the women never become pregnant, if they stopped casting their spells? Why risk everything?

Another point is that some of the things the sorcerers did were indeed very sensible. They did study nature and the processes in nature, they learnt something new all the time, and constantly tried new approaches. Some of the things they did gave obvious and excellent results, such as herbal medicine, brain surgery (trepanning), astronomy/navigation, irrigation, watering the dry fields with wet branches, planting of seeds in the ground, the use of water to cleanse wounds, and so forth. The sorcerers were the scientists and researchers of the Stone Age!

The final and perhaps most important reason for sorcery to survive, from the beginning of modern man to the Bronze- and in some places until the Iron Age, despite the fact that many of the sorcerers must have understood that what they were doing was pure humbug, was the fact that the sorcerers wanted to keep their status and power. The sorcerer had always been the most skilled, creative and intelligent man in the community, he had to be in order to survive as a sorcerer, so he would also be the man best suited to keep the *status quo*.



Romantic Image of the Norns, by L. Burger.

1.3 Religion

More and more sorcerers began, from the Neolithic era and onwards, to recognise the fact that they had no power whatsoever over the spirits of nature. However, rather than understand that there are no spirits in nature they concluded that they could not control them by means of sorcery. They still wanted the Sun to shine and the spring to return after winter, and they still needed rain and the women to become pregnant, so they tried a different approach. Rather than cast spells, the sorcerer turned into a priest and began to pray to the spirits and simply ask them for help instead. What had been impersonal spirits everywhere in nature therefore turned into anthropomorphic deities. They were addressed by the priests and because of that were given different names. Everywhere the spirits were given names, and the only reason we – the different European tribes – know them today by different names is the fact that we at that point had developed slightly different languages in the different parts of Europe.

In Scandinavia the spirit of thunder was, in the Bronze Age, given the name Punaz (“thunder”), which during the Iron age became PunaR, and finally – in the early Middle Ages – Þórr. He used a hammer (original meaning: “stone”) to produce the thunder. The spirit of lightning was given the name Lukan (“lightning”), that we know from the Viking Age as Loki. The spirit of the crop was called Sibjo (“reed”), that we know from the Viking Age as Sif. The spirit of the forest, the oak, the water, the Moon, the mountain, the Sun, love, and everything else, were all given names accordingly. They were named and myths were created to tell the coming generations about the deities and their properties. They taught their children about “slash and burn” farming by telling that Lukan once had cut the hair of Sibjo, the wife of Punaz. This explained why the thunder always “chased” (followed) the lightning. A whole mythology was created, telling the coming generations about the processes in nature and how they should relate to their deities and life in general.

The spirits had existed everywhere in nature, around man, and when the spirits turned into deities this did no change. The idea of sorcery still permeated the mentality and it was therefore not illogical for the religious man to think that man himself could take the role of a deity, by imitating it, and by doing so gain its powers. From being a sorcerer-king ruling the world the new king became a god-king. He did not only play the role of a deity; he was himself a deity! Everything a god did influenced the world in some way, and therefore the god-king had to be very careful. He should not touch the ground with his feet, so our forefathers most

often carried their kings around on shields or in chairs, or pulled them in wagons. He could not cut his hair, beard or nails either, because if he did all the growths of nature would be cut down too – because he was the embodiment of nature. He was not allowed to travel by boat between the spring and autumn equinox, because this would carry him (and thus nature) off into a premature death. Some places there were so many restrictions to what the king could or could not do, what he had to wear, how and when he had to get up in the morning, where he could sleep, and so forth, that it must have been a real torment to be king.

Sorcery did not disappear with the coming of religion. Instead it became a part of religion, and the trees, flowers, rocks, metals, bushes, herbs, animals and birds that had previously been seen as manifestations of different spirits in nature became attributes to the deities deriving from these spirits. The spells and traditions of the sorcerers turned into religious festivals. At the same time, the spirits and sorcerers continued to exist, alongside the deities and their priests, for a very long time.

1.4 The Mistletoe

The oak was the tree that was most often struck by lightning, and because of this it was regarded by the sorcerers as the most sacred tree in the forest. More than any other tree the oak possessed the solar powers. In the autumn the leaves fell off the tree and it appeared to die, but sometimes one could, even in winter, find a small, green and lush growth in the tree crown. This was the mistletoe. The sorcerers believed, because they found the mistletoe in the crown of the tree, where the lightning most often struck, that it came from the sky. That it was transported from Heaven to Earth by the lightning.

The oak's life force had retracted to the mistletoe for the winter, and therefore the tree itself was unusable as a source of solar power. The mistletoe on the other hand was very potent! All the power of the Sun, the life force of the oak, the spirit of the oak, was concentrated into this tiny bough. The sorcerer therefore climbed into the tree crown and cut down the mistletoe, and the sorcerer possessing such a bough had all the power and energy of the Sun at his disposal. It was used as medicine, as a powerful wand, for love spells, to manipulate fire and as ward against dangerous sorcery.

In the Bronze Age the oak spirit had turned into a god, known in Scandinavia at that time as Balþuz ("shining white body", "ball"), that we know from the Viking Age as Baldr (alias Bragi). In the myth about Baldr's death we learn that the gods had fun shooting arrows and throwing rocks at Balder, the oak tree, because he could not be harmed. After all, his life force was stored safely in the mistletoe. The belief that an individual's life force can exist outside the individual had great significance to the ancient man. Sorcerers could steal the life force from other creatures, like they could steal the life force of the oak by cutting down the mistletoe after the oak itself appeared to be dead.

Animals such as wolves and bears were dangerous even to man, just like winter was, with its darkness and freezing temperatures, and because of that the Scandinavians saw these animals as manifestations of the winter spirit. They believed that by killing these animals they could kill the winter spirit, and make the summer prevail and return. In fact, they were convinced they had to hunt and kill such animals for the summer to return. They could also steal the life force of these animals and use it to become still stronger and more powerful themselves. Every autumn, when winter approached, the sorcerers therefore went on a hunt for winter animals. They killed them, drank their blood, ate their hearts and took

their hides. This sorcerer, most commonly known as *berserkr* ("bear-skins") or *ulfheiðinn* ("wolf leathers"), stored his own life force in an egg, a box, a tree, an animal or somewhere else, and used the life force of the animal instead, or he wore the life force of the killed animal outside his own, as protection, leaving himself virtually invulnerable. Or so he believed anyway. In other parts of Europe they used other animals in this context, instead of or in addition to the wolf and the bear, such as lions and leopards in Ancient Greece and wild boars in Gaul and in Britain, but the idea was the same.

For the sake of simplicity I will throughout this book use the term "berserk" (sg.) or "berserks" (pl.) when referring to the different types of sorcerers with a totem animal.

We know of this totemic idea from the myth about the death of Baldr, but also from fairy tales, where sorcerers or trolls ("malicious spirits") are invulnerable because they have hidden away their own life force, for example in an egg, in a duck, in a well on an island far, far away. Before the hero can kill the protagonist and save the princess he must find the egg and crush it.



Romantic Image of the Death of Baldr, by L. Frölich.



Höder schlendert, von Loke verleitet, den Wurfstein nach Balder.
Zeichnung von Professor C. E. Doepler.

Romantic Image of the Death of Baldr, by C. E. Doepler.

1.5 The Matriarchy

Because of the belief that men had nothing to do with childbirth our ancestors lived, in the Stone- and Bronze Age, in matriarchal societies. The queen was found by arranging different races or contests, but always also a beauty contest. This is known in Norwegian as the *bryllup* ("wedding"), from Norse *brudlaup* ("bride races"). She had to prove herself as the most skilled as well as the most beautiful of the women. She had to sew a hat, a shirt and a cloth, and finish the job without speaking a word, laughing or weeping. She had to gather wool, card and spin the yarn herself, or perform other tasks intended to prove how skilled and qualified she was for the job. The winner was elected not for life, but for a year at a time. To keep her title the queen had to win next year's contest too.

We know of these beauty contests from mythology, the most obvious being the Greek myth about Paris, who had to give an apple to the deity he thought was the most beautiful. From Scandinavian mythology we have the myth about Skaði, who had to choose a spouse based on looking only at the feet of the gods. The one with the most beautiful feet was chosen by her. We also know about this tradition from the fairy tales; where Snow White's step mother was desperate in front of her mirror, because it told her that she was not the most beautiful woman in the kingdom (and that she therefore could still not become queen). Snow White was still the most beautiful, so the wicked step mother tried to poison her, with a poisoned apple, the symbol that was supposed to show that Snow White was the most beautiful of them all, and which she therefore gladly accepted. We know other details about these races and contest from other fairy tales, where women have to help old women with domestic tasks, in order to profit greatly.

In Scandinavian mythology the goddess Skaði wanted to avenge her father (originally husband), who had been killed by the gods. They agreed to give her a (new) husband as compensation. She wanted to marry the most beautiful god, Baldr, but she had to choose a husband just by looking at their feet. She found a pair, which she believed to be Baldr's, but which turned out to be Njörðr's. At first glance this does not support my theory that the queens were elected because of their beauty, because in this myth we see a god being chosen by a goddess because of his beauty. However, this is only due to the fact that the myths were changed some time in the Iron Age, when the Scandinavian society went from matriarchy to patriarchy. It was originally a god who chose his wife because of her beautiful feet. Skaði was namely the name of a god and Njörðr the name of a goddess, known from the Bronze- and early Iron Age as the god Skanþan and the goddess Nerþuz respectively.

Although the society was matriarchal it was still ruled by kings. The right to rule was tied to the queen. In order to become king and to rule the men had to marry the queen. They wanted an able king though, so to make sure they found the man best suited they arranged different types of contests. We know this best from Ancient Greece as the Olympic games, being one of the four Greek yearly contests with this purpose. In short; the winner of the beauty contest married the winner of the "sports" contests, and together they ruled the society.

In order to keep their titles and power they had to win new contests, every single year, and naturally they would eventually fail; the women grew old and lost their beauty, the men grew old and lost their strength. This system made sure the queen was always the most healthy (beautiful) woman, and the king the strongest and most skilled man of them all. This system also meant that if the queen kept her title, but her husband did not, she would marry another man instead, next year, or the other way around.

Not everyone could participate in these contests. To be allowed access to the arena in Scandinavia the challengers had to make the king vulnerable to them. The king was a god, a solar deity, and because the life force of the Sun was hidden away in the oak, and the life force of the oak in the mistletoe, all men who wished to challenge the king had to bring their own mistletoe, as a key to the arena. Without it they were not allowed to challenge the king. Elsewhere in Europe, they used other plants, like the laurel branch in Ancient Greece, but the principle was the same; they had to bring an evergreen bough from a sacred tree to win the right to challenge the king and compete for kingship.

We can therefore now understand why a myth tells us that Baldr was invulnerable to all attacks, except the one from Höðr ("hood"), who brought the mistletoe to the arena. For obvious reasons, he had received this key from Loki ("lightning"), the power that had brought it from the sky to the oak tree, where Höðr, the hooded sorcerer, found it.

We know that the challengers needed a key, the golden bough, to gain access to the arena, but we also know that he needed other keys. The king was not only a solar deity, but also represented every other male deity. From the Norwegian fairy tale *Prinsessen som ikke kunne målbindes* ("The Princess who could not be put to Silence"), where the main character, Askeladden ("Ash-limp"), was able to make the princess silent (and by doing so gain the right to marry her and inherit the kingdom) because he was the only bailer who had brought with him all the neces-

sary “keys” to make the king vulnerable; he brought a dead magpie, representing the life force of Skanþan/Skaði; he brought a wicker buckle, representing the life force of Punaz/Pórr, taken from Meginjörð (“Earth force”), his belt of strength; he brought a broken plate, representing the life force of the solar deity, Balþuz/Baldr, the broken Sun disc; he brought a worn out shoe, the life force of the forest deity Wídanaz/Víðarr, his one shoe, used to kill the wolf in Ragnarök; he brought a pair of goat horns, representing the life force of the fertility deity Frauþaz/Freyr, in ancient times portrayed as a horned god; he brought a wedge, representing the life force of Lukan/Loki, the lightning striking and breaking rocks. The queen in these fairy tales is often described as a princess, because in the Christian era, when these already politically incorrect fairy tales were told in secret, one could not comprehend how or tolerate that a queen who was already married to a king could divorce him and get married again, to the king’s challenger.

A good king had to be skilled too; he had to know how to make fire, catch fish, find fresh and clean water, tame horses, gather honey and do other things that would make him a good king. Both French and German fairy tales, like those collected and published by the Grimm brothers, as well as Norwegian ones collected and published by Asbjørnsen and Moe, are full of examples of competitions where the hero needs to show his skills. In addition to that, the challengers competed in races, they hurled rocks, threw spears and axes, swam, shot with bow and arrow or slings, ate and drank, rode horses and played different ring-games (known today as knight’s games), jumped and wrestled, or participated in other competitions. In most of Europe these competitions degenerated into pure entertainment, carnivals and knight tournaments when Christianity arrived, and in Scandinavia and parts of Eastern Europe, that were Christianised much later than the rest of Europe, they turned into innocent fun and traditional games for children.

The men did not only compete in physical games. They had to create the finest, funniest or cleverest poems and challenged each other in different word games. Physical strength was not enough to become king. A healthy, quick and alert mind was no less important.

If these competitions ended in a draw the two best men had to meet in a final wrestling contest, to determine who was the worthy winner. Some kings ruled for many years, but naturally they were all replaced sooner or later, by younger and stronger men.

The king, whether he was newly appointed or had his title renewed, had to make a

promise to do something spectacular within one year of his crowning. This promise is known in Scandinavia as a *brageløfte* (“winner’s promise”). The king swore his oath, and with all his force cut a wooden idol with his sword. The scar in the idol would remind everybody of his promise, and if the sword got stuck in the idol and he could not get it out he lost his title. The challenger with the second best record would then be allowed to pull out the sword, and if he succeeded he would become king instead. If he did he had to fulfil the oath given by the person who placed the sword there, though. If he too failed, the next one in line could try, and so forth, until one of them finally succeeded and became king. We know this tradition vaguely from the British myth about king Arthur, who became king of Britain after managing to pull the king’s sword from a stone. Arthur then had to free his kingdom, Albion, from enemy occupation, as promised by the original king when he cut the stone with his sword.

In the age of sorcery the old king himself was killed by the new, with a sword, when he took his place. This was necessary because the old king was the ruler of the world, and for his life force and power to be transferred to the new king he first had to be killed. This was replaced in the age of gods by the symbolic death of the deity when the king slashed the idol with his sword. The deity was sacrificed and his powers transferred to the new king.

The king was a god and was therefore given the attributes of the gods, so that he could do his work properly; the crown/halo was the symbol of the Sun god, the hammer (later sceptre) the symbol of the god of thunder and the sword the god of lightning. He blessed man on Earth by placing the sword on his shoulder and transferring the Sun’s grace to him. The queen was equipped with the attributes of the goddesses; a pot, a cauldron, a basket or a cup, that she could use to fertilize the Earth. She was a goddess, and just like life grew from the Earth each spring, in the form of crops and other growths, or from the sea in form of fish and other seafood, or from the womb of women in form of children, so did fertility emerge from her cup. Together the king and queen, the Sky god and Earth goddess, could bless the kingdom and provide it with everything needed; Sunlight, rain and fertility.

Because of the fact that they did not yet know how women got pregnant the queen’s attribute was initially not dependant of the king’s attributes to work. Her attribute was in itself able to provide the kingdom with fertility. It was only later they saw a connection between the rays of the Sun and raindrops and men’s sperm making women pregnant, but this only changed her attribute slightly, making it unable to work alone and on its own.

1.6 The Patriarchy

With time the right to become queen was passed down from generation to generation, from mother to daughter, so that women no longer could or needed to win contests to become queen. The daughters of the queen automatically inherited her title when she died. The sons inherited nothing, though, because the noble blood was passed down from mother to daughter, so if they wanted to become kings themselves they had to go out into the world and find princesses to marry, like Askeladden and most other men do in the fairy tales. When man realised that it was the sexual intercourse that made the women pregnant, and not contact with green and fertile boughs, the Sun rays or rain drops, the society changed. It turned into a patriarchy, and all of a sudden the sons inherited their titles from their fathers, and not the daughters from their mothers. Also, the young princes no longer had to venture into the unknown world in search of beautiful princesses (queen) to save, from terrible kings, described in the fairy tales as "trolls", "dragons" or "giants", or described as Pjazi in the Scandinavian mythology. Instead they could stay home and arrange marriages like we still do today.

The king's responsibilities however did not change with the coming of patriarchy, and the patriarchal kings were held responsible if anything went wrong, just like the matriarchal kings had before them. It happened, as late as in the Viking Age in Scandinavia, that the kings were executed and replaced by another noble man, because they did not live up to the expectations. The patriarchal kings also had the same restrictions as the matriarchal kings had had. The practical significance of the transition from matriarchy to patriarchy was actually minimal. The biggest changes can actually be seen in the mythology, which of course had to be rewritten (or rather: retold) and changed a lot. This was not always easy, and several myths were in this process made so difficult to comprehend that they lost their meaning for later generations. A good example is the myth I have already mentioned, about the god Skanþar/Skaði who turned into a goddess, and the goddess Nerþuz/Njörðr who turned into a god.

The sorcerer who was unable to keep up with his time, who did for some reason not become a god instead of just being a sorcerer, lost most of his influence in society during the Iron Age. He was no longer king and was reduced to some sort of medicine man, a healer, known from the Viking Age in Scandinavia as a *seiðmaðr* ("man of the customs", "man of the traditions"), because of his traditional sorcery practice. Finally, after the introduction of Christianity, the sorcerers



Romantic Image of a Sorcerer (Druid), by unknown Artist.

disappeared completely, and the last remaining sorcerers were probably burned at the stake by the Christians. However, their sorcery survived in the religion, both the European one and the Asian Christianity. When the early Christians failed to eradicate the European customs, holidays and symbols they simply Christianised them and made them their own.

2.0 THE CALENDAR WOMAN



Romantic Image of Baldr and Nanna, by F. W. Heine.

2.1 The Sun's Calendar

Our modern calendar has 12 months and each month has 28 to 31 days. All in all there are 365 days (and 366 every leap year). The Scandinavian Bronze Age calendar, known from a rock carving of a woman, found in what is today known as Bohuslän (in Sweden), has 13 months, each with exactly 28 days. There was also a New Year's Day, that every leap year lasted for two days, so all in all it has 365 days (and 366 every leap year) too. This is in fact the most accurate calendar known from the ancient world.

All the months had exactly 28 days and 4 weeks, so the 1st, the 8th, the 15th and the 22nd day of each month was always a Sunday. Likewise the 2nd, the 9th, the 16th and the 23rd day was always a Monday, and so forth. The New Year's Day was not a Sunday, Monday or any other day, but the New Year's Day.

The week had 7 days, because the sorcerers could only see seven celestial objects on the sky, which they identified as the most important spirits of nature, later to be identified as deities: Sunþon/Sunna (Lat. Sol), Manan/Mani (Lat. Luna), Tíwaz/Týr (Lat. Mars), Woþanaz/Óðinn (Lat. Mercurius), Punaz/Pórr (Lat. Juppiter), Frauþon/Freyja (Lat. Venus) and finally Haimadalþaz/Heimdallr (Lat. Saturnus). The month had 4 weeks because the Moon had 4 phases: the lunar eclipse/rebirth, the new Moon/birth, the full Moon/life and the waning Moon/death.

Day	Norse name	proto-Nordic name
Sunday	Sunnudagr	Sunþudagaz
Monday	Mánadagr	Manadagaz
Tuesday	Týsdagr	Tíwadagaz
Tuesday	Tírsdagr	Tíwadagaz
Wednesday	Óðinsdagr	Woþanadagaz
Thursday	Pórsdagr	Punadagaz
Friday	Freyjudagr	Fraujudagaz
Friday	Frjádagr	Frijodagaz
Saturday	Laugardagr ("cleaning day")	Laugadagaz
Saturday	-	Haimadalþadagaz

The Ancient Man believed that the spirits and the deities lived side by side with them, and every month was therefore seen as a house of a deity, who was greeted and welcomed the first day each month. The gods were greeted by the kings/lords and the goddesses by the queens/ladies.

You might believe that it would be impossible or at least difficult to find the names of the 13 months of the ancient calendar, but it actually isn't; they are all listed in the Scandinavian mythology, logically as "houses" or "homes" of the deities.

The Divine Houses (Norse)

1. Valaskjálf ("the shivering of the chosen/fallen"), home to the god Váli.
2. Himinbjörg ("sky mountain", originally "hidden mountain"), home to the god Heimdallr (originally a hermaphrodite).

3. Landvíði ("wood land"), home to the god Víðarr.
4. Sökkvabekkr ("deep creek", "sinking creek"), home to the goddess Sága.
5. Þrúðheimr ("strength world"), home to the god Þórr.
6. Breiðablik ("wide flash"), home to the god Baldr.
7. Nóaatun ("ship yard"), home to the god (goddess) Njörðr.
8. Glitnir ("sparkling"), home to the god Týr, alias Forseti.
9. Folkvangr ("folk meadow"), home to the goddess Freyja.
10. Alfheimr ("white world"), home to the god Freyr.
11. Gláðsheimr ("shining light world"), home to the god Óðinn.
12. Þrýmheimr ("noise world"), home to the goddess (god) Skaði.
13. Ýdalir ("yew dale"), home to the god Ullr, alias Höðr.

The Divine Houses (proto-Nordic reconstructions)

1. Walaskelbijo, home to the god Walan.
2. Hemenaberga, home to the hermaphroditic deity Haimadalpaz.
3. Landawaíduz, home to the god Wídanaz.
4. Sinkwabankiz, home to the goddess Sagon.
5. Prupohaimaz, home to the god Punaz.
6. Braidoblika, home to the god Balpuz.
7. Nowatuna, home to the goddess Nerpuz.
8. Glitnijaz, home to the god Tíwaz, alias Furasitan.
9. Fulkawangiz, home to the goddess Fraujon.
10. Albahaimaz, home to the god Fraujaz.
11. Gladashaimaz, home to the god Wopanaz.
12. Prímahaimaz, home to the god Skanþan.
13. Íwadalaz, home to the god Wulpaz, alias Hadnuz.

The first day of the Scandinavian calendar was not the 1st of January, but the New Year's Day, a day between the thirteenth and the first month. It was therefore seen as a world outside all worlds. It was not in the house of a deity, neither in the spirit garden nor in the realm of the dead, it was between autumn and winter, beyond life and death, and was therefore known in the Bronze Age as Medagardaz. We know this garden from the Scandinavian mythology as Miðgarðr ("the garden in the middle").

When I describe the ancient traditions and holidays I use the ancient calendar, and I need to in order to make any sense of it all. The week began with the Sunday, and a celebration of the Sun's life-giving and life-preserving force. They often ate circular shaped food, like pancakes or other round cakes, and ingredi-

ents were often vegetables, fruits and meat from animals sacred to the Sun. The Sunday began when the Sun set on the Saturday (around 21:00), and therefore the celebration of the Sunday began on the Saturday eve. The celebration often lasted until dawn Sunday morning. It was sacrilege to work on the Sunday, and the day was supposed to be dedicated to rest, music, poetry and joy.

The Friday was the day of love, and naturally the day of the goddess of love. The second Friday of every month was the Friday of the week of birth, and was therefore seen as a particularly favourable day for marriage. This Friday, the 13th day of every month, was also seen as the birthday of the deity. All the thirteen most important deities' birthdays were celebrated in turn, one every month of the year, and every year.

The Saturday was the last day of the week, and was dedicated to Heimdallr, because he was the deity for the principle; "you harvest what you sow". It was not a holiday, but the day everyone had to wash up well, clean the house and get ready for the next week and the holy Sunday. Clean and without any feelings of guilt.

2.2. The Mysteries

The first holiday of the year was New Year's Day, better known in English as Halloween ("initiation evening"), and in Gaelic as Samhain ("summer's end"). The sorcerers and later the gods (i. e. religious kings) and their challengers dressed up as different creatures with access to the realm of the dead. They fasted and hung their clothes in a tree or the gallows, to make it look as if they had hanged themselves. They wounded themselves with a spear, to bleed, smeared ash or white mud all over their bodies to look like the dead, they put on masks and sacrificed a cow or an ox on the grave mound, so that the blood poured down and into the grave underneath; into the realm of the dead. They then blew a horn, in the Bronze Age a lure, to open up the entrance to the realm of the dead. They then travelled into hollow trees, caves in the mountain, holes in the ground, or more commonly into the burial mounds. These were all seen as entrances to the realm of the dead. Inside, in the darkness of the grave, a woman was waiting for them, sprinkled in the sacrificed animal's blood and dressed like the queen of death. They then took at least some of the objects their dead forebears had been buried with and brought them back out.

The Scandinavian mythology tells us many things about this journey, one of them being a journey made by Heimdallr. Before I speak about that I have to tell you more about this mysterious deity. He was originally the spirit of the world tree, the tree growing on the burial mound, and was, when he turned into a deity in the Bronze Age, given the name Haimadalþaz ("world tree", "tree above the bed"). He was also known as Yggdrasill ("that which demands reverence", or "the terrible horse"). He was indeed originally just a tree, but not any tree; he was the tree of sacrifice. The crown of the tree was located in the sky (Ásgarðr), the trunk of the tree on the burial mound (Miðgarðr, since they visited it on the New Year's Day) and the roots in the realm of death (Hel), inside the burial mound. Therefore he was in contact with all the worlds. In the age of mythology he was regarded as a guardian between Heaven and Earth, and resided at the end of the rainbow in the sky – over the North Pole. He had the power to open up all worlds, by blowing his horn, called Gjallarhorn ("the sharp horn", "horn with piercing sounds").

When Baldr was killed by Höðr, using the mistletoe, Heimdallr volunteered to bring him back. The living had no access to the realm of the dead, but the god of death, Óðinn ("thought", "mind", "spirit", "fury"), obviously had. Heimdallr therefore disguised himself as Óðinn, opened up the gate to the realm of the dead and entered in silence. We know him in this context as the god Hermóðr



Bronze Lures from Denmark. Used to open up the Gate to the Underworld (the Burial Mound).

("Óðinn/spirit impersonator"). When disguised as Óðinn he could mount and ride Óðinn's horse, Sleipnir (a horse only Óðinn could ride), which is the same as the Trojan Horse we know from Greek mythology, sneak past the giant dog guarding the entrance, and get past the giant woman guarding the bridge across the river of forgetfulness. He tried to be quiet, but she still told him that he made more noise than several dead armies walking across the bridge before him had done. He was still alive, behind his disguise, and therefore he naturally made more noise than the dead, no matter how much he tried to be quiet. He rode for nine nights before he finally arrived and could ask the goddess of the dead, Hel, to bring Baldr back to the world of the living. She refused, but Baldr and his wife, Nanna ("eager", "resourceful", "industrious"), gave him two rings and a blanket, to bring back to the living gods as gifts.

In another myth the goddess Íðunn ("eager", "sustainable", "who likes to work", "diligent", "effective", or "recurring work"), the wife of Bragi ("glory", "first", "winner"), has because of Loki's schemes been abducted by the ettin Þjazi ("noisy") to the realm of the dead, to Jötunheimr ("world of hunger"). Íðunn was also known as Nanna and was Baldr's wife. Bragi was just another name for Baldr. When we know this the meaning of the myth becomes clear. In the myth about Baldr's death, Nanna's heart broke in two from grief when she saw the dead body of Baldr. In this myth she was instead abducted. This might sound a bit confusing, but it makes perfect sense; Baldr died when the mistletoe was removed from the oak tree! Þjazi was not another name for Höðr, Baldr's killer, but another name for the mistletoe itself. This is evident when we know that Þjazi was also called Bölpörn ("bad shoot", "bad branch", "painful thorn"). He is the bad shoot, the sacred branch, that contains the life force of Baldr when the oak tree dies. When cut down it killed Baldr and took Íðunn away, to the realm of the dead.

Þjazi was also known as Jörmungandr ("animated cattle", "the mighty stick", "animated staff"), and logically this Jörmungandr, better known as the serpent of Miðgarðr, was a son of Loki – the lightning that brought the mistletoe to the Earth. In the myth about Þórr and the serpent we learn that Jörmungandr was cast down into the abyss when Þórr hit him in the head with a hammer. The original meaning of the word hammer is "stone", and this is what the spirits in the sky were using to bring about the lightning. They sent the Sun's energy to Earth, when the lightning hit the trees. In a myth about Þjazi Loki was stuck to Þjazi, because he hit him with a stick that got stuck, and he could not let go of it. Loki was the fire from the sky, the lightning, that attached itself to the wood.

Loki was the reason Baldr was killed, and the reason Nanna died from grief. The mistletoe had been cut down from the oak tree, by the sorcerer (by Höðr, the "blind" man who refused to believe in gods, and instead still practised sorcery), because Loki had given him the life force of the oak tree, the mistletoe, so it was Loki's task to get it back. Like Heimdalr Loki had no access to the realm of the dead, so he had to borrow a "bird skin" from Freyja ("spare", "free", "love"). Just like Heimdalr he disguised himself and used the "bird skin" to gain access. He met Íðunn in the realm of the dead, turned her into a nut and brought her back home.

Yet another myth describing the New Year's Eve holiday's religious content is the myth about Þrýmir ("thunder", "bang"). He had stolen Þórr's hammer and taken it to Jötunheimr, far below the surface of the Earth. Þrýmir is yet another name for Þjazi, whose house is called Þrýmheimr. The power of the Sun is in this myth described as the hammer itself, the force that transfers solar power from Heaven to Earth. Heimdalr advised Þórr and Loki to dress up as women, disguising themselves as Freyja and her maid, to gain access to the Jötunheimr and find the hammer. The god of death had free access to the realm of death, but Freyja had too; of course, she was a goddess of the Earth. Hades was located in the Earth, in her womb. The deities always disguised themselves as the god of death or as Freyja, to find the Sun or the Sun's energy and to bring it back.

Óðinn placed his eye in the grave, in the well of the past, every year, in order to learn from the past. This might sound strange, but his eye was the Sun, Baldr, that lost its power every autumn and therefore had to spend the winter in the world of the dead. In other words; Óðinn had one eye in the world of the living and one eye in the world of the dead, at any time, and he could therefore freely travel between these realms, and was regarded as the god who escorted the spirits of the dead to Hel. Because so many gods disguised themselves as him, to gain access to Hel, many of the myths we know about Óðinn are in fact not about Óðinn himself, but about different gods who disguise themselves as Óðinn. He himself did not undertake these many journeys, but his name was used because it was him they impersonated.

A relevant myth in this context is the myth about Óðinn and Suttungr ("new concerns", "young sickness"). Óðinn turned himself into a serpent and crawled into a hole in Hnitbjörg ("nail built mountain"), the home of Suttungr, to steal his mead (made from the blood of the wisest man in the world). It was not a man made mountain, nailed together, but a barrow with a ship inside. He met

Suttungr's daughter, Gunnlöð ("invitation to fight"), who was very difficult and tough. He softened her up with sorcery. The mead was stored in three tanks: Óðrœrir ("touch of the mind"), Són ("sounds", "atonement") and Boðn ("bid", "warning"). He spent three nights with her and drank the mead from one tank each night. When he had drunk it all he turned himself into a bird and flew away. Suttungr saw him, turned into an eagle and gave chase. When they arrived in Ásgarðr ("the spirit garden") he suffered the same fate as Þjazi. The other gods lit a fire and set fire to his feathers: he fell down and they beat him to death.

The god (i. e. king) who made this journey had already disguised himself as Óðinn, but to gain access to the realm of the dead he also had to escort a dead person, or else he had no business being there. The god therefore brought the cut down mistletoe, the body of Baldr, and used it as a key to open up the road to Hel. In this myth it is described as a worm; Bölporn, alias Jörmungandr. The same mistletoe was used as a magic wand to soften up Gunnlöð; she calmed down because when she saw the wand (the mistletoe, a. k. a. the body of Baldr) she realised that he had a valid reason to be there.

Óðinn's meeting with Gunnlöð is described in another myth as well, where she is called by a different name, Rindr ("channel in the ground", "ditch"). In this myth Óðinn travelled to Hel to find a son who could avenge the killing of Baldr. He first had to (in a bride's race) defeat Höðr, Hel's husband, who in this myth is called Ullr ("wool", "cover up", "surround"), before he could lure her into bed. At first he failed to lure her into bed. He tried to threaten her, but she still refused to comply. Finally he had to, just like Heimdallr, Loki and Þórr, dress up, like a woman, to get her into bed. He then took her by force, so that Rindr became pregnant and gave him a son, Váli ("chosen", "fallen").

When we know all of this we easily understand the song about Óðinn in Hávamál; he hanged himself in the sacrificial tree, Heimdallr (alias Yggdrasill), and hung there for nine nights, tasting neither food nor drink, before he fell down into the grave and picked up the runes (secrets). He also learned nine spells (songs) from Bölporn.

We must realise that these mysteries were created in a time when man did not know that the sexual intercourse was what made the women pregnant. The myths about Óðinn who met Gunnlöð/Rindr are therefore not the original myths; they must have been changed in the transition from matriarchy to patriarchy. They only needed to be slightly changed; originally they told about a meeting

with the goddess, where the god (i. e. king) asked for Baldr to be allowed to return, and where he learned the secrets of life from her songs (spells). He himself was reborn as Váli, the chosen one so he still produced that new son he needed to avenge the death of Baldr. When he left the burial mound, the divine womb of the Earth goddess, he was born anew as Váli, when the Sun rose the first day of the new year, in Váli's month (house), Valaskjálf ("the tremors of the fallen/ chosen"). Váli was born in a dramatic play, trembling, shaking and screaming as he entered the world from the realm of the dead. Only one day old he was thus able to hunt down and kill Höðr, and avenge the death of Baldr.



Image from Vendel. Two Sorcerers in a Ritual Dance; one is possibly the horned Deity Váli and the other Höðr, alias Fenrir, wearing a Wolf's Hide.

In reality, after the dramatic birth of the newly initiated, the initiated men left for the forest to hunt Høðr/Ullr, the autumn and winter darkness. They did what was only logical; they hunted down and killed the animals that were seen as the spirit animals of winter. In Scandinavia this was the bear and the wolf, but in other parts of Europe they killed other animals instead or as well, and the religious hunt lasted for nine days. This was the nine days Óðinn hung in the sacrificial tree, the nine days it took to reach Hel. The clothes of these initiates still hung in the trees, while they themselves ran naked and unprotected through the forest, armed only with spears, clubs, shields, bows and arrows. Those who managed to kill such an animal stole the life force of the animal, and became berserks.

We learn more about this from the myth about Loki's son Nárfi ("corpse", "dead") and Váli. Váli was changed into a wolf and tore Nárfi to bits and pieces, and took his bowels and used them to bind Loki to three rocks. Loki is in this context of course yet another name for the winter spirit. This body of Loki, Nárfi, was maimed by the kings, who needed the blood, heart and fur from the bears and wolves they killed to become berserks themselves – and to overcome death. They put remains of the animals in the burial mound, or at least their bowels, and perhaps bones, and placed them on the rocks there. So Loki had to sink down into a cave under a cove of trees (the sacrificial trees on the burial mounds), and lie there like a corpse until Ragnarök, when he was finally set free and along with Høðr/Ullr attacked the gods. This might, by the way, explain all the bear skeletons or just bear skulls found in caves used by pre-historic man.

From Greek mythology we know another example of this death cult. Herakles ("glory of the chosen", "pride of the chosen") killed the Nemean lion and wore his hide as protection – and because of that became invulnerable.

In Scandinavia the deity Skaði lead the procession of hunters chasing Høðr/Ullr, and because of that we also know him as Öndurgoð ("procession god") and Önduráss ("procession spirit"). The hunt lasted for nine days, and because of that in order to survive the hunters had to ask for food and drink from anyone they came across. It was considered very shameful not to give something to this party, and those who refused to were often victims of retaliation. The hunters often killed their livestock, destroyed their tools or even set fire to buildings, and they had the right to do so.

In all the myths dealing with Halloween the gods return from the realm of the dead with something; Heimdallr/Hermóðr returns with two rings and a blanket

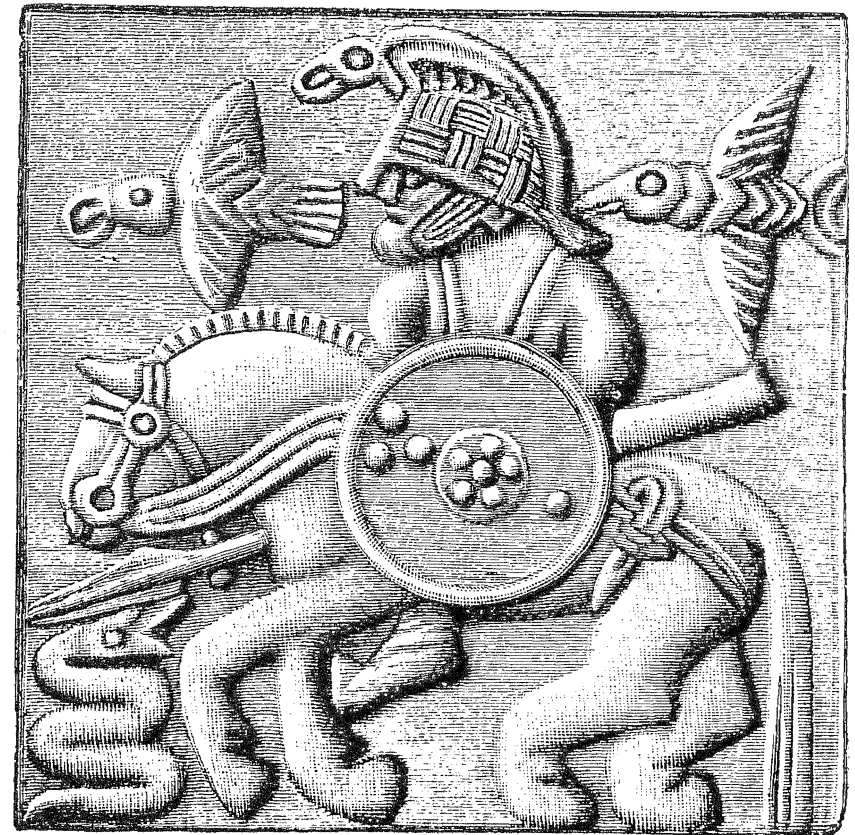


Image from Vendel. Possibly Hermóðr riding to Hel, Váli hunting the Winter Spirits or any Warrior engaged in a Ring Game.

from Baldr and Nanna; Loki turned Íðunn into a nut and brought her back home; Pórr got his hammer back and Óðinn found the runes. We don't know exactly when they brought these things back, though, and we know that they had to wait before they could get Baldr back.

In ancient times the dead were buried sitting up, along with all their most fine equipment, weapons, gold and other riches, because they believed that the dead needed all of this for their journey to Hel across the river of forgetfulness. When

there, in Hel, they no longer needed these items, and because of that, the living entered the burial mounds to collect them. They took these objects and hid them in the woods or elsewhere, for the Winter Solstice.

Because these men had been reborn as gods (Váli), if they hadn't been gods already, that is, they were not allowed to cut their hair or nails until after winter had been killed. That is; until after the Yule tide and in particular Ragnarök. If they did cut their hair or nails it would mean disaster for all the trees and other growths in nature, and the gods would lose all their strength.

On the 9th day of Valaskjálfr the hunt was over and the bear had been sent to his death. It was therefore called the Bear Night. This day marked the end of the religious hunt for Höðr/Ullr. He was now considered dead and banished to Hel. They celebrated the victory over these winter spirits with a feast, and usually ate either bear or wolf meat, depending on what predator they had managed to catch.

On the 25th day, that is when the Sun set on the 24th day of Himinbjörg, the Yule tide began, with the celebration of the Winter Solstice. The queen (or lady of the house) walked three times with the Sun around the house with a wand, a bough from the pine tree, a tree dedicated to Heimdallr, and declared that all the elves (i. e. the spirits of the dead) were welcome. The burial mounds were often built so that at Sunrise on the Winter Solstice the Sunlight entered the innermost chamber and lit it up, waking up the elves, just like Freyr had woken up the seeds in the ground when he sent the Sun beams to propose to Gerð ("fenced-in-field"). The elves (original meaning of the word is "white") came with Heimdallr, the god who had been reborn as Váli on the first day of the year. He took the gifts he had received from the dead (i. e. that he had found in the burial mound) and in the silence of the night he gave them back to the living (i. e. the reborn dead). These items were seen as the gifts from the elves (the spirits of the dead), because the gifts came from the dead – the dead relatives of the living. So the reborn dead regained their properties: things they had owned in past lives.

When the living for some reason didn't deserve these gifts, the Óðinn impersonators returned to the grave mounds and placed the gifts in the barrow opening.

The spirits of the dead were called elves ("white") because the dead were buried in white garments and because the seeds returned after winter in the form of white flowers in the meadow or as fair crops, but most importantly because they were free from guilt after having crossed the river of forgetfulness. They had for-

gotten everything, all their mistakes in life, on their way to Hel. Baldr was called "the white god" because he was so innocent, but Heimdallr too was called "the white god", because he was still dressed up like a dead person, in white clothes, and because after spending time in Hel he had the colour of the dead. At this time he had long hair, beard and nails too, because he had not been allowed to cut them since Halloween. Heimdallr led the procession of elves because he had once been assigned by Óðinn to create a better man on Earth. He visited three brides, great grandmother, grandmother and mother, and fathered three sons: Præll ("slave", original meaning of the word is "runner"), Karl ("free man") and Earl ("noble", "man"). Only the latter was seen as worthy by Óðinn, and Heimdallr was assigned to teach and train him, and keep an eye on him and his family. Every year, on the Winter Solstice, he visited Earl and his kin, from his home over the North pole, to tell them how they were doing.

To allow Heimdallr access to the home everyone should leave their doors unlocked on the Winter Solstice. To make sure he would not have to travel on an empty stomach they placed a bowl of porridge on the table in the living room. In addition to that it was illegal to keep any animals with claws inside this night, so that Heimdallr wouldn't wake up any sleepers when dogs began to bark and other animals made noise when he entered. The gifts from the elves were delivered to his good children (since mankind was considered to be his children), and ashes from the grave were delivered to the bad children. He could know who was good and who was bad, because he was able to see the entire world from his throne in Heaven, over the North Pole, and his hearing was so good he could hear the grass grow. He heard and saw everything.

There were many traditions for the Yule eve. You had to use seven different kinds of wood in the fire that night, one for each day of the week. Moreover, you had to eat meat from animals associated with fertility, such as the boar, and you had to sleep on the floor – to allow the elves to sleep in the beds. The decorative food was not to be eaten by the living, because this was for the dead (the elves), and (what was left of) it was not to be eaten until the 11th day of Sökkvabekkr (a day known as "The Horse of Hel").

Between the Winter Solstice and the Day of Eldbjörg ("fire-rescue") the dead spirits, accompanied by Heimdallr, Loki, Skaði, Þórr and Óðinn, travelled around, visiting all the villages and farms, fighting the spirits of winter. The shadows of Hel and Höðr/Ullr (the spirits of winter) had also returned when the elves/spirits of the dead had been called upon to rise from the grave. The gods ran or rode

through the night, not naked this time, but dressed in white garments and furs, screaming and shouting, armed with swords and flaming torches, to fight the spirits of winter. The men and women acted out the myths this way, and this tradition was the gods who lit bonfires in the forest to burn the feathers of Suttungr and Pjazi, and by doing so killed the winter spirits. Just like in the 9 days after Halloween, it was a religious obligation to provide food and drink to this party. On the 7th day of Landviði came the final showdown between the gods and the shadows, the summer and the winter spirits. This was known as Ragnarök, and is still celebrated today as the modern New Year's Eve, the 1st of January.

The road between Heaven and Hel had opened up, so the spirits of the dead could roam freely into the world and meet their shadows in battle, on a field called Vígríðr ("ride of the dead", "weighing of the dead"). Höðr had already been killed, and the bear lay peaceful in his winter lair, so what were they actually fighting against?

Höðr was a mysterious bear and wolf deity, a winter spirit, and was called Fenrir ("fenced-in-plague") when he attacked on Ragnarök. He was also called Mána-garm ("Moon swallower"). They say he was blind, but in reality his image was based on the sorcerer, dressed in robes and wearing a hood or large hat, who climbed the oak on the Autumnal Equinox and cut down the mistletoe and thus killed Baldr. The sorcerer wanted this bough because he needed it to rule the world, but the religious men and women accused him of being the reason winter came in the first place. They believed he killed summer by doing this!

Höðr too rose from the dead when called upon in the Yule tide, and charged on the field of battle, to fight Óðinn and the other gods.

Ragnarök is known from the myths as well. All the powers went to war against each other. Óðinn was killed by Höðr, who in this context was in shape of a giant wolf, Fenrir, i. e. the berserks. Þórr killed Jörmungandr, the mistletoe, but took only nine steps before he too died, from the poison of the worm. The light god Freyr ("spare", "free", "love") fought against the darkness, against Surtr ("black"), but was unarmed and fell. This was the Sunlight inside the burial mound on the Winter Solstice that eventually had to give way to the darkness. Loki faced Heimdallr and they killed each other; lightning against tree. Only ash was left after them. Týr ("beam") met the mighty dog guarding the entrance to Hel and they killed each other too. Víðarr was the most important hero in this drama; he killed Höðr/Fenrir and thus avenged the killing of Óðinn. He placed his big boot inside



A Sword Dance in more modern Times. Image from Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus, by Olaus Magnus.

the fire-breathing mouth of the wolf and tore it in half, but also burned his foot in the process.

The adults split into two groups in this festival. One group was to represent the elves and the evergreen forest, the summer that refused to give in to winter, and was led by the king. They were dressed in white dresses or skirts, adorned with branches from Víðarr's sacred spruce. The other group was to represent the shadows and darkness, winter trying to end all warmth and life, and was led by the prince. They were dressed in furs and black dresses or skirts. The spirits of nature were originally seen as hermaphroditic, and the participants represented them, so the men had to wear dresses and the women shirts.

The army of summer was armed with torches, saxes, sickles or scythes, and the army of winter threw ash. The battle was called a sword dance and was a ritual intended to ensure that summer prevailed over winter. If winter won this symbolic battle the crowd would shout things at the winter warriors, throw things at

them and perhaps even intervene to ensure that summer prevailed. Although it was only a symbolic battle summer had to win. Even a symbolic victory for winter would be disastrous. That's how things are when you believe in sorcery...

The life force of the berserks was hidden away elsewhere. When the summer warriors took their bear or wolf skins and tore them from them and trampled on them they killed the winter spirits, but left the actors unharmed. This was Víðarr killing Höðr/Fenrir.

The festival was called Ragnarök, which translates as "the origin, development, evidence, reason, end or destiny of the powers". This was not the twilight of the gods, as so many believe today, but their purification and renewal. This process took place every year and always at the same time of year. It was no coincidence that the battle took place on a Saturday: the day of the deity of purification.

The day after Ragnarök, the 8th day of Landviði, was the Day of Eldbjörg ("fire-rescue"). This was the final day of the Yule tide and they drank on this day a toast to the Sun, and rejoiced because they had rescued the Sun. Because of their sorcery/rituals the Sun was about to get its life force back. The queen (or lady of the house) walked three times against the Sun around the house with a wand, a juniper bough, a tree dedicated to Óðinn, to send the dead back to whence they came, to the realm of the dead. She drank some beer from a bowl and threw the rest into the fire. She then uttered a formula: "This high my fire, but not higher or hotter", to make sure the fire did not grow too strong. The others sat down on the floor with their hands on their backs and drank – or tried to drink – beer from a bowl placed on the floor. The more beer you managed to drink, the better it was for your luck and happiness the coming year. If you spilled any beer you were not allowed to drink any more, and had to be content with what you had already drunk.

The 11th day of Sökkvabekkr was known as Hel's Horse, and on this day they walked in procession from farm to farm, carrying torches as symbols of the cleansing fire. This was done to clean the house and throw out any remaining spirits still left there. This was the final purification after the Yule tide, and on this day they finally ate the decorative food they had made for the dead before Yule. This was also considered the day the bear turned over in the winter lair, and therefore the day Hel, the goddess of death, changed her mind and decided to let Baldr return. She did because she saw that the whole world and everything in it wept for him: the snow melted, creating small creeks everywhere. Hence

the name Sökkvabekkr ("deep creek", "sinking creek"). Hel sent a horse from the realm of the dead to the world of the living, to give them the news that Baldr would indeed return. Naturally, summer could not return until the snow started to melt, and it did this final winter month.

The 22nd day of Sökkvabekkr was All Heart's Day and was considered to be the day the birds began to mate. This was the day the deities fell in love with each other. You could tell they did, because their spirit animals, the birds, started mating. The sky fell in love with the Earth, the Sun with the Moon, and so forth. Baldr/Bragi fell in love with Nanna/Íðunn while still in Hel.

The 7th Sunday before Easter, usually the 1st of Þrúðheimr, was known as Washing, known from Gaelic as Imbolc or Imbolg ("washing"), and was regarded as the first day of spring. Washing lasted for a full week.

The Sunday of Washing was called Pork Sunday, and this was the day Hel's horse arrived with the news that Baldr would return. Everyone therefore gave thanks to Hel on this day. Pork Sunday was the day they transferred the fertility of spring to the women, by whipping their behinds with fresh birch branches. This custom survived well into the age of gods, and a form of this is in fact still practised in parts of Scandinavia.

On White Queen Monday they travelled the land to collect bacon, flour, eggs and other white food items for the large bride's race. Dressed in white and wearing ribbons and wreaths of flowers they danced and sang all the way, from farm to farm, women and men, girls and boys, led by the king (alias the May King) and the queen (alias the May Queen), whether they were sorcerers or deities. The king and queen sat in a carriage, drawn by horses or the others in the procession. The queen did all the talking and the ladies and girls sang "Bride, bride, most beautiful bride", to invite to the race all the women who believed they stood a chance at winning the bride's race. The females in the procession wore men's clothes on their upper bodies, and the men wore dresses, because they represented the hermaphroditic spirits. This custom remained even after the belief in spirits was supplemented with a belief in deities.

On White Tuesday, alias Pork Tuesday, they ate all the food products collected on the White Queen Monday in a great carnival for everyone. They said farewell to the meat before lent, and raised a Maypole. The Maypole represented the man's phallus and the wheel on top the womb of the woman. This was the union of the

male and female powers in the hermaphroditic world tree, Heimdallr. We know it as the Maypole, after the Roman name for Íðunn, Maius ("good mother"), but it was in Scandinavia originally called a high. This is the why we call such holy festivals high festivals. On the Tuesday the bride's race was held. The winner of the women's race was crowned with a flower garland and was given the title queen, and the man who won the men's race was given the title king.

Note to the English version:

The title King (No. *konge*) derives from the name of Jarl's youngest son, Konungr ("wonderful young"). This was Jarl's most talented and capable son.

The woman who came in second place was called princess, and the man prince, and if something were to happen with the queen or king the princess or prince would replace them. The queen and king married, but the princess and prince did not.

After the race the king and prince lead two hosts against each other, in a sword dance similar to the one during Ragnarök, only this time it was only a practice fight. All men and boys could participate, and the sword dance was little else than an arms exercise. The winter was however not under any circumstances allowed to emerge victorious from the sword dance.

On the Ash Wednesday the lent began, and it was called Ash Wednesday because they mixed ashes into the porridge and bread they ate (to cleanse the intestines). The lent lasted until Easter, and they were not allowed to sing songs or wear bright colours during lent.

The following Thursday was called the Thursday of Purification (No. *Skirtorsdag*), because it was a day of purification. This was also the day you were supposed to name domestic animals. The Thursday and the Friday were called the "whipping days", because you were supposed to whip the children with birch boughs in the morning (at least five strokes), to transfer the power of nature to them and to make them healthy and strong. On Friday nobody was allowed to eat until after Sunset, and it was therefore called Long Friday. The Saturday was called Dirty Saturday, because on this day they washed themselves extra carefully. Spring had arrived, and they were supposed to meet him with the greatest of respect.

The 22nd day of Þrúðheimr was called the Trono Day ("woman's day"), and was a high festival dedicated to war practice and sword dance. The fighters had to, like

in all sword dances, dress up like women. Like on the White Queen Monday the queen and king had, the day before, led a procession to collect food for the party.

The 1st day of Breiðablik was the Vernal Equinox. It was a day when fertility in general and in all things was celebrated, and was considered to be the day when the deities reached puberty. Everyone reaching the age of 14 that year went from being children to being youth, and everyone reaching the age of 21 that year became adults. The day before the Vernal Equinox they did as on the White Queen Monday and went from farm to farm to collect food for the great party.

The 26th day of Breiðablik was called Day of Walking (No. *Gangdag*). The queen, accompanied by all the girls, picked flowers to make flower wreaths. They put the wreaths on and walked in procession around the fields. In the Stone Age the queen asked the spirits for good crops, and in later ages she blessed the fields herself. Often she sat in a wagon and was pulled around by the girls. The queen carried a torch to scare off the destructive spirits from the field, and she brought water from a holy source. In addition to that, she brought beer and food, for the spirits of the field. The spirits ate the food in form of animals. The queen made holes or just one hole in the field, and placed a juniper bush in it. She poured the contents of an egg and some grain into the hole(s), and then sang a song. For example:

*"Våkn opp, våkn opp, både åker og eng.
Nu har du sovet lenge i seng.
Nu har det vært både snø og regn.
Nu har sommernatten kommet."*

(Eng. "Wake up, wake up, both field and meadow,
you have slept for a long time now
we have seen both rain and snow
the summer night has come now.")

After this they raised a Maypole and did what they normally did on high festivals, including the procession the day before, to collect food for the feast.

The 27th day of Breiðablik was called Second Summer Day, and they did the same as they had done on the Day of Walking. The 28th day of Breiðablik was called Third Summer Day and they did the same as they had done on the Day of Walking. The 8th day of Nóatun was called the Great Day of Walking (No. *Store*

Gangdag) and yet another time they did what they had done on the Day of Walking. This was how they woke up the fields after winter.

Easter began the 1st Sunday after the 1st Full Moon after Vernal Equinox, and was seen as the day Baldr/Bragi (and Nanna/Íðunn) returned from Hel. This was the day the colours of nature returned after the darkness of winter. In the Easter they climbed the tallest mountains in the east, so they could see the Sunrise as early as was possible, on Easter morning. They carried round stones or other round objects with them up into the mountains, all symbols of the Sun, and built cairns on the mountain peaks. They did this to help the Sun rise and fly high again. They ate eggs in the morning and the candy (dried fruit, nuts etc.) left after winter was eaten. This was Íðunn's fruit, that they now, when she would return, could enjoy freely.

The next Sunday, and every Sunday after Easter, until White Sunday (the seventh Sunday after Easter), they gave thanks to the spirits/deities for bestowing upon man all the wealth of nature. Each of these Sundays were celebrated the same way as the Trono Day.

The 13th Day of Nóatun was called the Night of Small Valborg ("castle of the chosen"), known in Gaelic as Beltane ("the white fire"). This was the day all the deities married, in Valborg, another name for Ásgarðr ("spirit garden"). The winners of the bride races finally could marry and replace the winners of last year's races. They took over (or continued) as queen and king and were to rule until the next Night of Valborg. They swore allegiance holding a hammer (or stone) and a ring, and the ceremony was led by the (last year's) queen. It was celebrated as any other high festival, with processions to collect food and sword dance and everything.

The Sun and Moon married, and because of that this was also known as Honey Moon, honey being a symbol of the Sun. The bride and groom, the chosen ones, had to travel to Valborg to get married, and therefore the actual wedding has to us become known as a journey.

The Night of Small Valborg was a day devoted to weddings because it was the first Friday 13th after Baldr and Nanna had returned from Hel. The mythological context was the journey of Skanþan/Skaði to Ásgarðr, where he married the most beautiful of the goddesses. Just as a groom no longer needed to look for a bride when married, this day marked the transition from hunting time to sowing time.

Every Friday 13th after the Night of Small Valborg and until Autumnal Equinox a new wedding was held, for the god and goddess, the king and queen, and all these weddings were celebrated in the same manner. When Christianity arrived, with a new calendar, where Friday the 13th almost never occurred, these weddings were moved to Sundays.

The 15th day of Nóatun was called Cuckoo Day and was a day when it was possible to tell if this was going to be a good year or not. If you heard the cuckoo in the north everything went as planned. If you heard it in the south you could harvest in dry weather. If you heard it in the west it meant sickness and death. If you heard it in the east you would have a happy marriage. The cuckoo was of course a manifestation of a spirit.

The 27th day of Nóatun was the Night of Great Valborg, and this was celebrated in the same way as the Trono Day.

The 8th day of Glífnir was called Bear Wake (No. *Bjørnevåk*), and was the day the bear was believed to wake up and leave its lair. Höðr was, in other words, back from the grave, reborn and ready to kill Baldr again. We know the religious content of Bear Wake from the myth about Fenrir. The gods could not let the dangerous Fenrir (Höðr) walk about freely, after he returned (i. e. was born again by the Earth goddess), so they decided to tie him up. They struggled to achieve this, and in the process Týr lost his hand. Fenrir bit it right off. Týr was the Sky god, and the Sun and Moon were his two palms, and the eating of his one hand was explained by both the lunar eclipse and Sunset.

All the Sundays of Glífnir were days when all disputes were discussed, at the Thing ("court/parliament"). The king represented Forseti (another name for Týr) and judged in all cases.

The 1st day of Folkvangr was called Source Drinking (No. *Kildedrikking*), and on this day they gathered around the holy sources. They placed pairs of figures made of leaves, as manifestations of Freyja and her brother and husband Freyr, by the sources and drank the holy water, that was believed to be good for health on this day in particular. The day was otherwise celebrated like the Trono Day.

The 13th of Folkvangr was the Summer Solstice, a festival for good luck in war. They did the same as they had done on the Day of Walking, but the field and meadow was now already awake, so the queen and girls went in procession to

ward off any harmful spirits. She sang a song. For example:

*"Nu vil jeg syfte (rense) sørken av åkeren min
så den blir både ren og fin;
så setter jeg i den older og brisk,
så den holder seg sterk og frisk."*

(Eng. *"I clean the filth from my field now,
to make it both clean and nice,
and I place in it a juniper bough,
to keep it healthy and strong."*)

The Summer Solstice was the birthday of both Freyja and the Sun itself. It was the day she rose up from the sea, wearing only a wreath of flowers on her head. She was called Vanadís ("beautiful goddess"), and the Romans called her Venus ("beautiful"), because she was the most beautiful of all the goddesses. The queen represented her, and was given her name. Because of that we still call married women *Frue* (in Norwegian) or *Frau* (in German), both deriving from her name.

Freyja was also known as Frigg, a name that means exactly the same as Freyja, and was a daughter of Njörðr and Skaði, the sea and the river that flowed into the sea. They celebrated her birthday by lighting bonfires along the water's edge, so that from a distance it looked as if this long chain of fires was a necklace, known from the mythology as Brisingamen ("the necklace of fire"). It was a custom to dance and sing by the burial mounds on the birthdays, and on Freyja's birthday the queen and young girls also took a bath in the sea. When they emerged from the sea they represented Freyja being born from the sea. They then jumped naked through the flames from the fires, to drive away destructive spirits. It was, in addition to this, a day when young couples were engaged, and the day was otherwise celebrated just like the Trono Day.

Herbs gathered on the Summer Solstice was seen as particularly powerful, and one could pick pebbles from the holy sources and wells, and use them for sorcery, but they had to be picked before Sunrise. It was therefore also known as Hammer Day ("stone day"). Dew from the holy trees could be collected and used as healing potion.

The 22nd day of Folkvangr was called the Day of Cleaning and Waking up (No.

Syftesokdag). They did the same as they did on the Day of Walking, only they – as on the Summer Solstice – did it to ward off destructive forces. This day was otherwise celebrated in the same manner as the Trono Day.

The 15th day of Alfheimr was Harvest Sacrifice (No. *Slátteblot*), also known as Wake-Up-Day, known from Gaelic as the festival of Lugh ("light"). The day marked the beginning of harvest. Before harvest could begin the grain spirit was killed and burned, or it was – in the shape of a goat made from last year's straw – cut into bits and pieces and buried in the field's four corners and in the field itself. By the time of the Bronze Age the spirit of light and grain had become a goddess and a god, Sibijo and Frauaz, known from the Scandinavian mythology as Sif and Freyr respectively. The grain deity was still represented by a straw figure in animal form – usually a goat. In addition to this, the god was cut down with a sax, sickle or scythe in a sword dance. Finally a symbol of the god, usually a loaf of bread or (in the most ancient of times) a cone, was cut into bits and pieces and buried with the straw animal in the field/meadow. The grain spirit had to die and be buried in the ground for new grain to come. They took the first straw harvested and made a new animal of it, and stored it in a safe place for next year's Harvest Sacrifice.

The grain spirit, and later Frauaz/Freyr was killed because this was its/his purpose; to ascend from the black Earth (Hel/Hades), to grow crops, wake up and then be cut down so that man could bake bread.

The 14th and 15th day of Glæðsheimr was called Livestock Weekend. The cattle was brought home from the pasture on the 14th. The 15th was known as Pack Saddle Saturday, because after having brought the cattle home from the pasture on the 14th the home was all of a sudden full of pack animals. In Ancient Scandinavia they lived in long houses, and the cattle was placed in the north end of the building, so that man could benefit from the heat they generated, especially in the cold northern wind.

The 22nd day of Þrýmheimr was the Autumnal Equinox. On this day Höðr killed Baldr again. The sorcerers, wearing a hooded dress or cloak, climbed the oak on the Autumnal Equinox and cut down the mistletoe. They did it because they needed the powerful bough for their sorcery. The religious men (i. e. those who believed in the deities) tried to stop them, but always failed (or why else would winter come anyway?). The Autumnal Equinox was followed by a lent intended to show how sad everyone was, because of the loss of Baldr and his wife. It was

forbidden to sing or play music for as long as the lent lasted (until Winter Night). The day also marked the end of harvest. All berries, fruit, corn and other food-stuff were safely indoors by now. To celebrate this they all wore a wreath made from the last straw harvested.

The 1st Sunday after the 1st full Moon after the Autumnal Equinox was the Winter Night. This was the day the oak spirit, and later Baldr, began his journey to the realm of the dead. It was celebrated like a funeral of the Sun, and we know the religious contents of this funeral from the myth about Baldr's burial. Baldr was sent on a visit to Hel in a boat, because the Sunset was seen in the sea in the west. Small rowing boats or sailing boats were loaded with firewood and were set alight, making it look as if the Sun itself was aboard. They then sent the burning boat out to the sea or down a river, to make it cross the sea/river of forgetfulness and enter Hel.

The final Saturday of the year, the 28th day of Ýdalir, was called Reflection Day, and was in a sense just like any other Saturday, except that you had to wash and clean yourself and your home particularly well this day. You should think about what had happened the last year, and clean your mind too, so that you could start the next year clean and ready for new tasks.



3.0 THE DIVINE SECRETS

3.1 The Runes

Óðinn hanged himself in the tree of sacrifice and hung there for nine nights before he fell down and picked up the runes. He learnt in the same process nine magic songs from Bölporn, the mistletoe, and drank the mead that taught him the art of poetry. The belief that the deity/man visiting Hel learnt something special in the realm of the dead was very strong. We see the same from our fairy tales, where a person travels to a special place and learns or becomes something special. In the fairy tale about Mother Holle (i. e. Hel) the main character is herself turned into or rather covered in gold. The prince kissing Sleeping Beauty (No. *Tornerose*, “thorn-rose”) also learns something special, because the thorn is a symbol of Bölporn, the mistletoe, and the rose an ancient symbol of love, intimacy and secrecy (as seen in the Latin proverb *sub rosa*), associated with Freyja. We see the same reverence for the secret knowledge in the Greek mystery religions, that one acquired in the mystery chamber. They brought different object with them inside, and were allowed to see and sometimes participate in religious plays. In these plays the deities (i. e. masked priestesses and priests impersonating deities) gave the audience a feeling of having learned something important, described by the Romans as *mysterium tremendum, facinans et augustum*; the solemn that brings forth tears and trembling.

The word rune translates as “secret knowledge” or just “secret”, and the runes are most often identified as characters on par with the Latin alphabet. Originally they were sacred symbols intended to help the sorcerers memorize their sacred songs. We believe the runes date from no earlier than the 2nd century, but we can still use them to reveal much older secrets, because the runes are based on more complex Bronze Age and even Stone Age symbols.

The secrets of the runes were only known by the sorcerers and the deities who travelled to the realm of the dead. By studying the runes we can find out exactly what it was they learnt in the burial mounds, and what made them able to rule their societies as queens and kings for so long.

The rune-row consisted of 24 runes divided into three groups of eight: Freyr's group, Hagall's group and Týr's group.

Freyr's Group of eight



Fehu



Uruz



Pursaz



Ansuz



Raiþo



Kauna



Gebo



Wina

Hagall's Group of eight



Hagalaz



Naupi



Isaz



Jera



Íwaz



Perþi



Algiz



Sowili

Týr's Group of eight



Tíwaz



Berko



Ewaz



Mannz



Laguz



Inguz



Dagaz



Opala

3.2 Freyr's Group of eight

1. *Fehu* means "cattle" and is connected to Auðhumbla ("silence", "weak sound"), that came about by the entrance of the burial mound, when the Sun beams (from the world of fire) met the cold darkness inside the burial mound (the world of fog). This was the cow/animal that was sacrificed on the burial mound when the sorcerers were to travel to the realm of the dead to bring back the power of the Sun. The rune is a picture of the horns of a cow, and represents cattle, possessions and material wealth.

2. *Uruz* means "proto-ox" and is connected to Ymir ("sound", "howling", "crying"). In the Bronze Age in Scandinavia they used lures to break the silence after they had opened up the burial mounds on the New Year's Eve. They later used the lures to summon the deities to the burial mounds, to announce that the gate to Hel was open. The lures were after this dismantled and buried, and thus they created the world between all worlds, Miðgarðr, every year from the body of Ymir. The rune is a picture of an ox without horns, because they have been taken from him and have been used to build the world, and represents drizzle, strength, health and the well-being of the body.

3. *Pursaz* means "thirsty" and "noise" and is connected to Bölporn, the giant worm we best know as Jörmungandr ("animated cattle", "the mighty stick", "animated staff"). The dead went to Hel in silence, but the sorcerers and later gods made a lot of noise. To unlock the grave they needed the mistletoe; this was what they needed to make the guardian of the bridge of Hel believe they were Óðinn escorting a dead (Baldr) to Hel. The rune is a picture of a thorn, and represents hidden, negative powers, hostility and a portal to or a transition to this.

4. *Ansuz* means "spirit" and is connected to Óðinn ("spirit") and Sága ("story"). The gods disguised themselves as Óðinn to get access to Hel, and wounded themselves with the point of a spear to make it look as if they were bleeding. In Hel they learnt the secret stories, the songs and spells from the spirit/goddess of death. The rune is a picture of the point of a spear, of the type made from bone and used for fishing in the Stone Age. It represents signals, messages from the deities, gifts and divine knowledge.

5. *Raíðo* means "thunder" and "ride" and is connected to Þórr ("thunder") and Loki ("lightning"). The kings went on a hunt for the spirits of winter, who had killed Baldr and abducted Nanna. The rune is a picture of the lightning that

strikes from Heaven to Earth before thunder. It represents a journey, a ride, the ride of the mind after death and a rider.

6. *Kauna* means "mound", and is connected to Svartr ("black"). The dead returned in the Yule tide, from the pitch black burial mound, when the Sun lit up the innermost chamber as it rose on the Winter Solstice morning. The kings had to fight the shadows of Hel in the forest, armed with burning torches, bonfires and sparks. The rune is a picture of a light entering a dark chamber through a tiny opening. It represents light and enlightenment, guarded by the darkness around them.

7. *Gebo* means "gift" and is connected to Heimdallr ("world tree"). Inside the burial mound they found the weapons, tools and other valuables that had been placed in the grave along with the dead. They brought these items back out for the reborn dead to enjoy – again – when they were given to them on the Yule night. The rune is a picture of two pairs of wings, symbolizing time. When one pair rests the other pair takes over, so time never stands still. It represents gifts, spiritual gifts, talents, sharing, offers, reward and loyalty.

8. *Wina* means "joy" and "beauty" and is connected to the Vanir ("beautiful"), the winners of the beauty contests, and Fjörgyn ("mountain"). After the Yule time the winter spirits were weak and nature regained its strength and beauty. The rune is a picture of a beautiful woman. It represents absence of suffering, balance and harmony.

3.3 Hagall's Group of eight

9. *Hagalaz* means "hail" and "transition" and is connected to *Ægir* ("awe"), who is also known as *Gymir* ("sea"). When *Baldr* dies the world is covered in snow (water) and is changed. The rune is a picture of a hail storm in the autumn. It represents hail, pebbles, dissolution, harmful forces of nature, and the transition from one world to another.

10. *Naubi* means "need" and is connected to the Norns; *Urð* ("past", "honour"), *Verðandi* ("presence", "the coming") and *Skuld* ("future", "guilt"). Need followed in the wake of the autumnal darkness and winter cold. The rune is a picture of a man with a rope tied around his waist, being a symbol of slavery and the destiny limiting our freedom. It represents the limitations of man, need, slavery, causes to suffering, lessons, hardship and necessities.

11. *Isaz* means "ice" and is connected to *Hel* ("hidden", "death"). The flood (rain and snowfall) came every year and covered the world. It took *Baldr* and his wife to *Hel*. The gods went into the mound and met her there. The rune is a picture of an icicle. It represents ice, cold and lack of movement.

12. *Jera* means "year" and is connected to *Freyja* ("spare", "free", "love"), also known as *Frigg* ("spare", "free", "love"). Inside the burial mound they met a spirit/goddess who freed them from death and gave birth to them again, as they stepped out from her womb (the burial mound). The rune is a picture of a man and a woman lying next to each other in the burial mound. It represents the fruitful year, spring and autumn, and marriage.

13. *Íwaz* means "yew", "archer" and "bow" and is connected to *Skaði* ("jump", "climb") and *Höðr* ("hood"). The rune is a picture of a waxing and waning Moon. It represents defence, yew, bows made from yew and the hunt for predators the nine first days of the year.

14. *Perþi* means "journey" and is connected to *Váli* ("chosen", "fallen") and *Sleipnir* ("glider", "flower"), known from the Greek mythology as the Trojan horse. This was the disguise of the combatant, when he annually participated in the *Ragnarök* battle in the forest. The rune is a picture of a horse in vertical flight. It represents a journey to the world of the spirits/gods, an expedition, an initiation, secrets and a journey to find answers to secrets.

15. *Algiz* means "elk" and is connected to *Víðarr* ("forest"). The battle of *Ragnarök* took place in the forest, and ended when the sorcerer/the god *Víðarr* symbolically killed the berserks, by tearing the furs from them and trampling on them. The rune is a picture of flames reaching for the sky from a burning tree trunk, or the head of an elk. It represents birth and life, health, physical health and strength.

16. *Sowili* means "shining" and is connected to *Sol* ("shining", "Sun"), alias *Sunna* ("brilliant", "bright", "Sun"). The Sun was saved in *Ragnarök*. The rune is a picture of the flames from a fire. It represents perfection, the Sun, the Sun rays and mysterious eloquence, creativity, eyes, stars and feminine charm.

3.4 Týr's Group of eight

17. *Tíwaz* means “beam” and is connected to Týr. To get the Sun’s power and summer back they believed they had to first fight the winter spirits, and a week after Winter Solstice, on Ragnarök, they charged. They killed them or chased them back underground and enabled the Sun’s power and summer to return. The rune is a picture of a (Yule) tree or a ray of light shaped like an arrow. It represents victory in battle, war and a spirit or god of war, a guiding planet or star and a strong beam that blesses man on Earth.

18. *Berko* means “birch”, originally “shining white” or “bright white”, and is connected to Jörð (“Earth”). When the men had hunted down the winter spirits Earth began to regain her strength. The rune is a picture of a woman’s breasts. It represents growth, birch, rebirth, new life and fertility.

19. *Ewaz* means “horse” and is connected to Máni (“measure”, “Moon”). He sent a message to the living, in form of a horse telling them that Baldr and his wife would be allowed to return. The rune is a picture of a horse riding across the sky. It represents movement, pace, horses, progress, loyalty and the heavenly bodies’ journey across the firmament.

20. *Mannz* means “man”, originally “thinking”, and is connected to Bórr (“equip”, “initiate”). Men started a new life after winter, and picked up where they had left the previous year. The rune is a picture of a man and a woman kissing each other, sharing spirit (breath). It represents humanity, its spirit and ability to think and remember, human nature and knowledge about man.

21. *Laguz* means “water” and “running water” and is connected to Njörðr (“favourable”, “positive force from below”). The sea was no longer covered with ice, or too dangerous to travel, and it could provide man with wealth again. The rune is a picture of a waterfall. It represents streams, lakes, oceans, lakes and rivers, and their fertility.

22. *Inguz* means “meadow-friend”, “field-friend” or “love” and is connected to Freyr (“spare”, “free”, “love”). The ground was no longer covered with ice, and it was green and provided man with wealth again. The rune is a picture of the spouses (of the *Jera* rune) united in the act of making love in the meadow. It represents perfection, destiny, love, desire, willingness, creative energy and fertility.

23. *Dagaz* means “day”, originally its meaning is “heavenly light”, and is connected to Baldr (“shining white body”, “ball”), alias Bragi (“glory”, “first”) and Nanna (“eager”, “resourceful”, “industrious”), alias Íðunn (“eager”, “sustainable”, “who likes to work”, “diligent”, “effective”, or “recurring work”). The Sun’s power and summer returned, and all the fruits of nature returned. The rune is a picture of an hourglass. It represents days, divine light, prosperity, fertility, life, cycles, periods, deadline, breakthrough and hope.

24. *Opala* means “noble”, original its meaning is “state of mind”, and is connected to Ásgarðr (“the spirit garden”). The sorcerer’s kingdom was back, reconstructed from the image he had of the previous kingdom. The rune is a picture of the ancestral seat, the throne, symbolizing the rights of the nobleman (the sorcerer). It represents inheritance, the ancient property law (No. *Odelsrett*), property, homeland, noble, nobility, inherited goods, fatherland/motherland, reputable family, family and nation.

4.0 VÖLUSPÁ

4.1 The Prophecy of the Sorceress

The songs/poems learnt by the sorcerers in the grave must have been hard to understand for the uninitiated. Or perhaps the songs were common knowledge, but only the sorcerers knew what they were really all about. Today Völuspá (“the prophecy of the [female] chosen/fallen [i. e. sorceress]”) is understood as some sort of Scandinavian myth of creation, and a prophecy dealing with the end of the world. As I will show you in this chapter this common interpretation is not correct.

To understand what the songs are really all about you first of all need to know that they need to be interpreted in a specific sequence. We learn from Hávamál that the sorcerers’ songs and spells were closely associated with the runes. So to understand the songs we need to read each verse with the sequence of the runes in mind, and to link the verses to the right runes.

I may add that I spend no time trying to make the English translation of theses verses poetic, although they really are, in the original (Norse) language, but instead I try to translate them as literally as I can, to ensure that the meaning is not lost.



Romantic Image of the Norns, by J. Gehrts.

4.2 Freyr's first Group of eight

1

I ask for silence from all
sacred families,
large or small
sons of the world tree;
you will, that I, father of the chosen,
tell well
the old stories
to those who are first amongst men.

This verse is connected to *Fehu* and the cow *Auðhumbla* ("silence"). The winners of the bride's races, "the first amongst men", sacrificed a cow on the burial mound, after hanging their clothes in the world tree, to learn the sacred verses in the realm of the dead. The chosen/first amongst men had to be silent, to imitate the dead, but also because they had to listen to the spirit/goddess of the dead (in the burial mound) to learn the old stories (sacred songs).

2

I remember hunger,
from the previous year,
that in the past
had given me food;
nine worlds I remember,
nine boughs
famous tree
underground.

This verse is connected to *Uruz* and *Pursaz*, *Ymir* (the sound of the lures) and *Bölþorn*. The sorcerers/gods dressing up like gods, had fasted in the days before the New Year's Eve, in the previous year (according to the ancient calendar) and was now ready to enter the burial mound. They needed nine sacred boughs (including the mistletoe; *Bölþorn*), to open up the nine different levels of *Hel*. For each bough presented to the queen of the grave, they learnt a new song. Thus *Óðinn* could sing that he learnt nine songs from *Bölþorn*; the sacred boughs.

3

It was in the beginning of the year
when there was
neither sand nor sea
nor cool waves,
no Earth
nor the high heavens
the door (gap) was open
grass nowhere.

This verse is connected to *Pursaz* and *Bölþorn*, the serpent. The New Year's Eve was the first day of the year, or to be precise a day between all years, and thus a day beyond all worlds. It was a Middle Earth, *Miðgarðr*, a world between all other worlds. The chosen were about to enter the dark grave chamber, where he saw nothing; no sand nor sea, no cool waves, Earth or Heaven. The entrance to the grave mound was open, and there was no grass either in the realm of the dead.

4

Before the sons of the initiator
opened up the land
those who created the famous
world in the middle;
the Sunlight shone from the Sun
on stone halls
whereupon the ground grew
green growths.

This verse is connected to *Ansuz* and *Óðinn*. Before the chosen opened the entrances to the burial mounds, the world in between all worlds, while the Sun shone outside. On top of this stone hall the grass and other growths grew. Even the trees were allowed to grow freely on the burial mounds, and they were fenced in to make sure no animals grassed there. No herbs were ever gathered from the burial mounds either. The dead had themselves created (built) their own grave mounds (the world in the middle).

5

The Sun threw rays of Sunlight
on the Moon
the right hand
on the firmament;
Sun who did not know
where she belonged,
Moon who did not know
what power he had
stars who did not know
where they belonged.

This verse is connected to *Raípo* and *Kauna*, Pórr, Loki and Svartr. The chosen went into the stone halls, the graves, where the Sun, Moon and stars had no power and could not be seen. Inside was only darkness, until Winter Solstice, when the Sunlight woke up the dead and showed them the way out.

6

Then all the powers went
to the seats of the end (i. e. the grave)
the sacred gods,
and agreed;
night and her descendants
were given names
morning was it
and midday
afternoon and evening
to count the years.

This verse is connected to *Gebo* and *Heimdallr*. The chosen went to the innermost chamber, where the dead were seated, as was the queen of the grave, and they were there for a long time; all night, the following morning, midday, afternoon and evening, right into the next day, when the new year began. I may add that in the Stone and Bronze Age the dead were usually buried sitting up, and not lying down, as is common today.

7

Met the spirits
in the field of stagnation
those who temples and mounds
built high;
built heaths
forged valuable objects,
created thongs
and made tools.

This verse is connected to *Gebo* and *Wina*, *Heimdallr* and *Fjörgyn*. In the burial mound they met the dead, their own ancestors, who at one point had built the burial mounds and temples, and they took the valuable items the dead had once crafted, that now lay in the grave with them.

4.3 Hagall's first Group of eight

8

They played in the yard,
were playful,
had no shape
were used to gold;
until three women,
noisy maidens
very powerful,
came from the world of hunger.

This verse is connected to *Hagalaz* and *Naubi*, *Ægir* and the Norns. When they left the burial mounds they were still naked, their clothes still hanging in the world tree, and they were therefore without shape. They were initiated and brought with them the gold and other valuables from Hel, the world of hunger. The women playing the role of Hel/the Norns in the grave came out as well, still chanting sacred verses.

9

Then all the powers went
to the seats of the end (i. e. the grave)
the sacred gods,
and agreed;
who should create
the king of dwarves
from the blood of the sea
and from the legs of the blue.

This verse is connected to *Ísaz* and Hel. A dwarf (Nor. *dvergr*) is often misinterpreted as a small manlike creature, but the original meaning was “opening in the ground” or “entrance to the grave (or cave where the dead rest)”. This becomes obvious when we know the feminine form of the word; *dyrgjá*, from Nor. *dyrr* (“door”) and *gjá* (“opening in the ground”). The king of dwarves was in other words the initiated king, who had been in the grave. He was reborn as an initiate from the half blue and half white goddess of the grave. He was reborn from Hel’s womb, from between her blue legs; the burial mound. The sea of blood was the blood of the cow that had been sacrificed on the burial mound, only to drip into the grave and turn the women waiting there red.



Romantic Image of Freyr and Skírnir, by C. E. Doepler.

I can add that this explains how Loki could travel to the underworld and have the dwarves forge the wonderful gifts to the gods. All these items came from the openings in the ground; from the burial mounds of the forebears.

10

There was the one who drank himself to courage
had been most important,
amongst the dwarves,
and the two rested;
the manlike
many completed
dwarves from the Earth
like the rested said.

This verse is connected to *Jera* and *Freyja*, the protector of the burial mound. The man going into the ground drank the blood of the sacrificed animal and became initiated. One of the women slept ("rested") with him several times the time he was there (over the course of three nights). She taught him how to procreate, what to do to make women pregnant, so that many (noble) children would come from her womb.

11

Waxing, waning,
north, south,
east, west,
steal everything, dwells by,
corpse and dead,
waiting for a wave, washed by a wave,
walk clumsily, narrow waters,
without and the other/second,
great grandfather, mead-wolf/heavy drinker.

This verse is connected to *Íwaz* and *Skaði* and *Höðr*. After they drank the blood of the sacrificed animal and slept with the woman in the grave they could participate in the hunt for *Höðr*. The hunt lasted for six (or nine) days, under a waxing and a waning Moon, in all directions and everywhere, until the clumsy bear (walking clumsily) had been killed and turned into a corpse or had been driven to the realm of the dead. They stole the life force of the animals, who then became without life force, and became berserks. They drank a lot of mead when out hunting because the mead was believed to elevate man to the heavens and enable them to see the spirits, because dew drops from the sacred tree had been mixed into the mead. All the initiated men participated in this hunt, even the old ones.

12

Wall and animated elf (white),
elf (white) wind, brave,
inflexible and defiance,
comfortable, colour and wise,
corpse and new mind,
I have now the dwarves
powers and good advice
correctly counted.

This verse is connected to *Perþi* and *Váli* and *Sleipnir*. The wall between the world of the living and the world of the dead was broken down, at Sunset on the Winter Solstice. All the elves (i. e. innocent and purified spirits of the dead) rose from the grave, as did the shadows of *Hel* – the negative traits of the dead. They came from the grave and stormed out to participate in the great *Ragnarök* taking place in the forest.

13

File, wedge,
found, needle,
handle, will,
handy, wise,
twin, fire
iron (for blood-letting), and drill,
healthy, horn-drill,
well known and calm,
open place with much sand, edge,
strong oak shield.

This verse is connected to *Algiz* and *Víðarr*. The valuable items taken from the burial mounds were given to the living on the Winter Solstice. Not all the gifts were physical; some were mental or spiritual, and some of these tools were used to fight the shadows of *Hel* in *Ragnarök*.

14

The language of dwarves is spoken
in the lingering masses,
human children,
reckoned amongst the kin that is allowed to,
those who sought,
from stone halls,
mud embankment home
until/to horses charge.

This verse is connected to *Sowili* and *Sól*. Only initiates, who knew the runes of the grave, were allowed to participate. They had visited the halls of stone, the homes of the dead under the mud, and charged the shadows on horseback, armed with torches (artificial Suns).

4.4 Týr's first Group of eight

15

There was the dripper
and defiant troll,
tall, funeral,
sea plain, glowing,
dear, alder
wave, gentle spirit
unmixed, mixed,
pieces of guts, great-grandfather.

16

White and king,
strong oak shield,
hider and make cold,
bog/sea and the easily allured;
it always remembered high
while man lives
has long been considered as relative
of he who gives permission.

These verses are connected to *Tíwaz* (15) and *Berko* (15/16), Týr and Jörð. After the Winter Solstice came Ragnarök, when the gods armed with torches and hot coals, and accompanied by the dead ancestors from the grave, had to fight the trolls (harmful spirits). Today we often think of trolls as ugly giants, but they were originally malevolent spirits who caused damage in the world. The elves, the dear dead relatives (like the great-grandfather) were in the army with the king (sorcerer) and the other initiates; those who were allowed by the deity to participate in the battle.

17

Until three came
from the crowd,
strong and loving
spirit to the house;
they found on land,
not in good shape,
ash and elm
without fate (life).

18

They had no spirit,
had no mind,
blood or language
or good colour;

the spirit gave them life spirit,
the one who lures (with singing) gave them minds,
life colour attached to them,
and good looks.

These verses are linked to *Ewaz* (17) and *Mannz* (18), Mani and Borr. The summer spirits (the gods) and the defeated winter spirits (the berserks) returned after Ragnarök to the grave mound; the well of old wisdom. The sacrificial trees, the ash and elm, grew there, and in them hung the clothes that the fighters had left there, when they went to participate in the Ragnarök battle. The men representing the winter spirits had had their totemic bear or wolf killed, when the gods/Víðarr tore their furs from their bodies and trampled on them to kill the winter spirits. Because of this these men had no longer spirit, a mind, blood, speech or good colour. The life forces of the men were hidden away in their clothes, hanging in the sacrificial trees. They were naked, tired, weakened, cold and possibly also badly beaten, and really looked like lifeless corpses. They were then carried or pulled to the grave mounds, where the gods put their clothes back on (and thus gave them back their spirits, mind, speech and colours).

19.

I know an ash stood
called "the one who demands reverence",
tall tree, poured
white mud;
dew comes from there,
falling in the valleys,
stand evergreen over,
the well of honour/the well of stone.

This verse is connected to *Laguz* and *Njörðr*. The sacrificial tree, a. k. a. Heimdallr, located on top of the grave mound, was watered by the goddess/queen/housewife, who then used a bough from one of Óðinn's holy trees (the ash and the juniper) as a wand and used it to purify the house. The remaining spirits of the dead were thrown

out, on the day of Eldbjörg, and were sent back to the realm of death, to the well of honour/stone (the grave).

20

From there came three maidens,
very wise
from the sea
which is under the tree;
one was named honour/past,
another the coming/present,
cut in pieces of wood,
guilt/future the third;

they were not satisfied
with the fluid life in the well,
they declare the fate of the children
of the age.

This verse is linked to *Laguz* and *Njörðr*. All the sorceresses, the wise women, gathered at the burial mound, the well of honour (where the sea/river of forgetfulness is located) to compete for the queen title. They tested their skills to find the one who best mastered the art of sorcery. The old queen, the coming queen and all the others too.

21

She remembers sacred folks
first (best) in the world,
they the golden horse
pierced with a spear
in the hall of the tall (i. e. Óðinn)
they burned her;

three times they burned her,
three times, she was born,
often, and not infrequently,
but she still lives.

This verse is linked to *Inguz* and *Freyr*. The sorceress remembered, i. e. she knew, how the king and queen grew corn and made the fields (the golden horse) fertile.

This she needed to know if she wanted to become queen. The queen had pierced a sacred bough, a wand, into the field, into the realm of death (Óðinn's hall), and planted seeds there, to make it fertile. The golden horse was the field and its corn, which had been burned repeatedly, since they at that time used the "slash and burn" technique. This golden horse came back from the Earth (was born) over and over again.

22

Fair/light was her name
wherever she went,
a chosen woman good at predictions,
she performed sorcery,
she knew the customs
she played with the customs
and was always well regarded
amongst ill women.

This verse is linked to *Dagaz* and *Baldr* and *Íðunn*. The sorceress who won the bride race, the beauty contest, was naturally light/fair, a term which in antiquity was synonymous with beautiful. She was skilled at sorcery (medicine) and naturally popular with the sick individuals she visited and healed. She knew the customs and mastered them better than everyone else. That's why she was chosen to be their queen-sorcerer in the first place.

23

Then all the powers went
to the seats of the end (i. e. the grave)
the sacred gods,
and agreed;
either the spirits would
suffer losses
or were all the gods to
own party/feast (strive).

This verse is linked to *Opala* and *Ásgarðr*. The gods went to the mound and hoped that they had chosen the right queen, and had found the right king. It would be a good year if they had, or a bad one if they hadn't.

4.5 Freyr's second Group of eight

24

Óðinn launched
his spear into the crowd,
of sacred individuals
the best/winners of the world;
the wooden wall was broken,
the yard of the spirits,
the beautiful predicted the outcome of the battle,
they stood ready on the battlefield.

This verse is linked to *Fehu* and *Auðhumbla*. On New Year's Eve the sorcerers were symbolically hanged in the ash trees, wounded by spearheads. Heimdallr blew the horn so that the mound was opened up (i. e. the gate in the picket fence surrounding the burial mound was opened) and was ready to accept the "gods". The beautiful sorceresses knew what was about to happen and prepared for the inevitable Ragnarök.

This is the 24th verse, but it is actually an elaboration of the 1st verse. A verse might contain only some information, so it was necessary to create additional verses to include all the information needed in the song, and since the verses were related to the runes, which came in a certain order, it was necessary to begin anew when the rune-row was completed once. After *Opala* the *Fehu* rune came again, and so one could continue indefinitely.

25

Then all the powers went
to the seats of the end (i. e. the grave)
the sacred gods,
and agreed;
who had in the air
mixed dishonesty
or to one of giant stock
given Óðinn's maiden.

This verse is connected to *Uruz* and *Pursaz*, Ymir and Bölpörn. Baldr had been killed by the mistletoe, at the Autumn Equinox, and his wife Nanna, alias Íðunn, had been abducted to the underworld by the giant Þjazi. They now had to be re-

covered, and therefore the gods travelled into the burial mound.

26

Thunder accuses,
swelling of strength and courage,
he seldom sits still,
when he experiences treachery like this;
when oaths are broken,
words and promises,
all strong amongst men
are broken.

This verse is connected to *Pursaz* and Bölpörn. The mistletoe, the bad branch, originally a good force, had failed the oak tree and killed Baldr and his wife. The thunderclouds bore witness to what the gods/spirits thought about this.

27

She knows that the worldtree's
sound (Gjallarhorn) is pawned
it is common
under the sacred tree;
she sees a river poured,
a waterfall leading to coarse mud
from the pawn of the father of the chosen.
Do you still know enough or what?

This verse is connected to *Ansuz* and Óðinn. The bronze lures were "pawned" under the sacred tree, meaning they were dug down to the next New Year's Day, when they again were to be used to open up the road to Hel. The pawn of the father of the chosen was either Baldr himself (Óðinn's eye) or the valuables the dead were buried with, when they were placed in the burial mounds. The gods entered the mound to get hold of them "again" (believing they were the reborn dead themselves). The valuables were not gone for all time, because it could be recovered, so it was only a "pawn". "Do you still know enough or what?" suggests that the goddess of the mound, teaching the visiting god these verses, wondered if he knew enough or needed to hear more. Maybe it was about time the listener understood what the song was about. "Do you still not know what I'm talking about?" She wants him to give her the key words, to prove his knowledge.

28

She sat alone outside,
when the old came,
the frightening young god,
and looked her in the eyes.
What do you ask me,
why tempt you me?
Everything I know, Óðinn,
about how you lost your eye,
in the well of reminiscence;
the one who reminiscent drinks mead
every morning
from the pawn of the father of the fallen/chosen.
Do you still know enough or what?

This verse is linked to *Ansuz* and *Raipo*, Óðinn and Þórr. The gods, the young men dressed up like Óðinn, were in fact “the old god” and young at the same time. So the old god who came to visit Hel was in reality a young god, and he was scary because he looked like he really belonged in the grave; wearing a mask, being naked or wearing a white dress and with bleeding wounds, the body painted with ash and often with a gallows’ rope hanging around his neck. The god tempted Hel, slept with her to get a son (and he might originally have whipped her with a green branch to make her fertile), and was so himself born as the son when he left the burial mound; from Hel’s womb. Óðinn’s lost eye was the Sun/Baldr, which/who he temporarily lost at the Autumn Equinox, when Baldr was killed and sent to the underworld. Hel, who had Baldr in her company, knew all about this, of course; about how the Sun had gone down in the sea and lost its power.

29

The army’s father chose for her
rings and pendants,
owned wise speech
and animated objects (the mistletoe)
to make predictions with,
she looked into every world.

This verse is linked to *Kauna* and *Svartr*. The god said the key words he had to know to receive education from the sorceress in the grave, and showed her the mistletoe; this was the key he needed to be allowed to take the valuables with



Romantic Image of Loki, by C. E. Doepler.

him from the grave mound when he left. He learned how to make predictions for the future year (for every "house", "world", i. e. every month of the year).

30

She saw those who choose the fallen/chosen
come from far away,
ready to ride
to the divine folk;
guilt held shield,
thrust the other,
strife, battle, stave bearer
and spear thrust.
Now they are all counted,
the fearless women of the ravagers,
ready to ride the ground
like choosers of the fallen/chosen.

This verse is connected to *Kauna* and *Gebo*, *Svartr* and *Heimdallr*. The goddesses equipped the gods with weapons and shields, from the grave, and made them ready to fight and kill Höðr in the religious bear and wolf hunt, starting the first day of the new year.

31

I saw Baldr,
the blood stained and glorious god,
child of Óðinn,
persecuted by fate;
a stave grew up
on the old plain,
thin and very beautiful,
mistletoe.

This verse is linked to *Kauna* and *Gebo*, *Svartr* and *Heimdallr*. In the tomb the god found the body of the god Baldr, and gave him the mistletoe so that he would get his strength back, grow up again and come back from the dead.

32

This tree,
that seemed so innocent,
was turned into a dangerous missile,
cast by Höðr;
Baldr's brother was
born on that day,
he took Óðinn's son (here Höðr) and killed him
one night old.

This verse is connected to *Gebo* and *Heimdallr*. The mistletoe, which looks quite innocent, was used to kill Baldr, when Höðr removed it from the oak tree. The god visiting the grave mound left the mound as Váli, Baldr's brother and avenger, who started the hunt for Höðr and killed him just one night old. The religious bear and wolf hunt had begun.

33

He did not rest his hands,
he did not comb his hair,
until he could carry
Baldr's enemy on the funeral pyre;
but Frigg wept
in the hall with a fence around it,
over Valhall's bad luck.
Do you still know enough or what?

This verse is connected to *Wina* and *Fjörgyn*. While the berserks were hunting restlessly for bears and wolves in the forest the goddess sat and wept in the burial mound.

4.6 Hagall's second Group of eight

34

Then the fallen/chosen binds knots
changes the sacred gods,
we become harder
of life in that time.

This verse is connected to *Hagalaz* and *Ægir*. The gods who hunted down and killed the bear and the wolf were changed, they became harder and tougher, because they took the animals' life force and made it their own. Thus they became unbeatable and immortal in battle. They became berserks.

35

She saw hard life
under each grove,
the treacherous body,
looking like Loki;
there she who sinks down sits
not satisfied with her house.
Do you still know enough or what?

This verse is connected to *Naubi* and the Norns. Höðr/Fenrir, wolf and son of Loki, was killed by the hunters and sent to Hel (the grave mound), where they slaughtered him. The woman who sunk down was the woman imitating the death goddess. She was not happy about staying for such a long time in the grave mound, where not only the dead lay, but also where the men skinned dead animals, drank blood, ate animal hearts and where the remains were tied and fastened in the grave mound with animal entrails.

36

A river falls from the east
through poison valleys
saxes and swords,
it is called terrible (sword) scabbard.



Romantic Image of Freyja, by C. E. Doepler.

37

Stood north of
the plain below
a hall of gold
for the kin of the sparks;
another stood
where it never gets cold,
the hall of hunger,
which they call the sea/fire.

This verse is connected to *Isaz* (36) and *Hel*, and *Jera* (37) and *Freyja*. The river that fell from the east was the rain and snow that came from the sky instead of the Sunshine; deadly ice hurting the face like a sword. The plain below was the grave and the realm of the dead. In the far north the Sun rested in the grave – and it was then a hall of gold, lit up by the Sun itself. It rose in the east, shone in the south, went down in the west and at night it slept in the grave in the north. An alternative Sun had therefore been lit in the home, by the sorcerers/gods (*Freyja* and her husband), in the fire, where it was never cold. Embers and the fire kept mankind warm through the winter.

38

She saw a hall standing
far away from the Sun
on the beach of corpses,
the door opened to the north;
poison dripped
in through the roof,
this is the room given to
those with a worm backbone.

This verse is connected to *Isaz* and *Jera*, *Hel* and *Freyja*. Far from the Sun lay the burial mound, inside the Earth where the Sun could not light up (other than on the Winter Solstice), where the cold rain was dripping through the roof and down unto the dead, There were only skeletons left in the burial mounds; those with a backbone looking like a worm.

39

There, she saw wading
in strong currents
the men who
gave false testimony
and outlawed murderers (wolf murderers),
who told whispering secrets
there fell a blow from below (*Höðr*)
and had great success on the corpses,
enjoyed tearing in outlaws (wolves).
Do you still know enough or what?

This verse is connected to *Perþi* and *Íwaz*, *Váli* and *Sleipnir* and *Skaði*. She saw the men who in secret hid the gifts they had found in the burial mounds for later use (and thus gave false testimony), and she saw the outlawed berserks (bear/wolf) they hunted. These animals were the winter spirits who had murdered *Baldr* and kidnapped his wife. They travelled through the autumn darkness and rain. Out there in the forest *Höðr* (the bears and wolves) fell to rest, in the end, and the gods drank their blood, ate their hearts and took their skins. They “made progress on the corpses”, when they took their life-force, by “tearing” their corpses, and they became berserks.

40

In the east the old sat
in iron forests
and gave birth to
the children of the walled in rider (*Höðr/Fenrir*);
was of them all
most skilled stealer
and destroyer of celestial bodies,
in form of harmful spirits (trolls).

This verse is connected to *Algiz* and *Víðarr*. In the east, the old one sat in the forest where the battle of *Ragnarök* took place, where iron weapons were used (“the forest of iron-tipped spears”). The old was the goddess of death who gave birth to *Váli*, the sorcerer/god who became a berserk; those who representing *Fenrir* (*Höðr*) at *Ragnarök*. The sorcerers were skilled warriors, who at the Autumn Equinox stole the mistletoe from the oak tree, and thus destroyed (the power of) the Sun. They dressed in women’s clothing and wore big hats to mimic

the hermaphroditic spirits of nature. When the sorcerers stole the mistletoe from the sacred trees they were seen as harmful spirits, and were therefore called trolls ("harmful spirits").

41

It filled up with blood
from those who will soon die
from the flock of the rusty power,
blood runs red;
the sunshine was black
in the summer after
the weather was unreliable.
Do you still know enough or what?

This verse is connected to *Sowili* and *Sól*. The battle was fought, between the elves and shadows, gods and berserks. The gods killed those who had risen from the graves, the winter spirits, who had been killed during the hunt for Höðr. Because iron rusted in the grave they were called "the flock of the rusty power". Elves, the dead, all of whom were sent back to Hel, did not see the Sunshine the following summer, and could not know what kind of weather they would receive in the coming year. It took at least nine months before they could be reborn again, after a woman had gone to the grave and transferred them to her stomach.



4.7 Týr's second Group of eight

42

Sat there on the mound
and struck the harp
a sorceress-guardian
happy servant of eggs;
the cock crowed
in the forest of gallows,
beautiful red cock,
was called hider/concealer.

This verse is connected to *Tíwaz* and Týr. Sorceresses went to the mound to be in contact with the dead (kings) who lay there, and by doing so have the opportunity to give birth to them again. Although *Völuspá* is recorded in the mythic age, the verses stemmed from the Stone Age, when people still believed that the women became pregnant from contact with the fertile nature, and that the dead could be reborn by women who touched their remains. The verses were later circumscribed, but much of the contents remained relatively unchanged. The sorceresses sat on the mound, touched the remains of the deceased, and played and sang songs (spells) to give birth to the dead again.

43

Crowed by the spirits
the one with golden hair,
to awaken the folk
of the father of battle (Óðinn);
another crowed
beneath the Earth
a cock black as soot,
in the halls of Hel.

This verse is connected to *Berko* and Jörð. The beautiful sorceresses, with long blond hair, sang and raised the dead, and brought them back to life. Some stood outside the mound, some sat on top of the mound, while those who were to give birth to the dead were sitting inside, in the pitch black grave, because they had to physically touch their remains. This is how the dead got back their life-force and could begin the journey back to life, through the mother's/Earth's womb.

44

The swallower is barking loudly,
in front of the cave leaning over the hillside,
the ties/mounts are torn,
hardship is growing,
she knows that the flocks chants,
forwards I see, even further,
to the end and meaning of the powers,
the destiny of the victorious god.

This verse is connected to *Ewaz* and Máni. The dead rose from the grave because the sorceresses cast spells to revive them, to let them loose from the ties of the grave. They could begin the journey back to life, through the womb, and be born again. Because the dead had been awakened from their sleep Höðr, who had also been resting in the underworld, could come back, and he would again become Baldr's death.

45

Brothers will talk against each other
and become each other's bane
sister's sons will
waste their bonds,
the world is hard,
many judgements against crimes,
axe time, sword time,
shields will be broken,
wind time, wolf time,
before man's world will be turned up-side-down.
no man will
spare the lives of others.

This verse is connected to *Mannz* and Borre. It was foreseen that the brothers Baldr and Höðr would be each other's bane. Höðr would kill Baldr with the mistletoe and would himself be killed by his brother (Váli) because of this. The fight against the winter spirits, who had been released, would return. Bears and wolves would be chased and killed in the autumn darkness, before the winter; gods would fight against gods, in the coming Ragnarök, and the world was turned upside down. Man, the thinking man, Jarl's enlightened offspring, could predict this.

46

The sons of reminiscence play,
the destiny is fulfilled,
when the horn of sound
sounds
The world tree (Heimdallr) plays loudly
the horn is in the air,
the mind (Óðinn) talks
with the head of reminiscence.

47

The one who demands reverence (the world tree) trembles
ash standing
the old tree groans
a giant (Fenrir) is let loose,
everyone is afraid
to travel on the road to Hel,
before black
wants to swallow it.

This verse is connected to *Laguz* (46./45.) and *Inguz* (47./45.), Njörðr and Freyr. Everything that was predicted would happen, when the gods blew in their bronze lures and announced that Ragnarök had begun. Óðinn (the sorcerers) remembered the verses and the runes he had learned, when he placed his eye in the past (the burial mound). The wind howled in the winter night and Fenrir/Höðr was let loose, along with the other dead. Everyone was scared, when they travelled into the wilderness to fight the powers of death, in the darkest winter night; Freyr's killer.

48

What is happening to the spirits,
what is happening to the white (*i. e.* elves),
the whole world of giants is yelling and howling,
the spirits want peace at the assembly;
dwarves groan
in front of their stone doors,
knowing much about stone houses.
Do you still know enough or what?

This verse is connected to *Dagaz* and Baldr/Íðunn. The Sun is shining in the grave's innermost chamber, on the Winter Solstice, and awakens all the dead. The burial mounds have been opened and all the dead fare towards the battle-field. Baldr and his wife (the elves) will also visit the living in the Yuletide, and led by Heimdallr they bring with them gifts from the grave.

49

The swallower (Fenrir) barks loudly
in front of the cave leaning over the hillside,
the ties are torn,
hardship grows.

This verse is connected to *Opala* and Ásgarðr. Those who died and were buried, including Baldr and his wife, are allowed to come home on a visit on the Yule eve.



Romantic Image of the Chosen Warrior, Váli, by C. E. Doepler.

4.8 Freyr's third Group of eight

50

The weak comes from the east,
pushes the source in front of him,
very powerful wand
with giant courage;
the worm moves,
eagle enjoys
to tear in corpses with rust-red (or pale) beak
the nailed vessel is loosened.

This verse is linked to *Fehu*, *Uruz* and *Pursaz*, *Auðhumbla*, *Ymir* and *Bölþorn* (*Jörmungandr*). The mistletoe is hung up in the Yuletide, and this is the dead Baldr and the – at this time – weak solar power, who has come to visit the living. The dead (who comes in shape of birds) enjoy the decorative food, (lifeless) cake men, cake wives, seeds and cake houses, which they consume with their pale beaks.

51

Keel comes from the east,
the world of fire arrives
destiny of the peoples
Loki steers;
witless powers fare about
with all strictness,
they are the brothers to
bee-shoes who travel across river.

This verse is connected to *Ansuz* and *Óðinn*. The fire shines from the torches, pieces of wood kindled by lightning, and saves Baldr and the world from the winter spirits. The berserks, who had hidden away their own life force (senses) elsewhere, fare forth in the Yuletide with hardship. They are the brothers of the gods and elves who have arrived flying (with bee-shoes) from the grave, across the river of forgetfulness.

52

Black fares forth from the south
with repeated attempts to destroy
the Sun shines from
the fallen/chosen god's sword;
stone mountains (-heaps) crumble,
malevolent spirits (trolls) fare to and from,
tread freely on the road to Hel,
the sky is cloven.

This verse is connected to *Raiþo* and *Pórr*. The darkness takes over the world when the Sun sets, but the initiated gods wield torches (like swords). Elves and trolls (i. e. benevolent and malevolent spirits), summer and winter spirits, ascend freely from the underworld. The gods cast sparks into the air; flaming arrows and spears are cast through the air, burning wheels travel down hillsides and sparks spray from fires when the gods strike them with sticks and torches.

53

Then comes the maple's (Frigg's)
second grief;
when Óðinn charges
to fight the wolf,
and the bane of the baler (Freyr),
light against black;
then will Frigg's
joy (Óðinn) fall.

This verse is connected to *Kauna* and *Svartr*. Fenrir (*Höðr*) kills Óðinn and sends him or one of his eyes back to the grave, when the Sun goes down on Ragnarök and darkness overcomes the light.

54

The swallower is barking loudly,
in front of the cave leaning over the hillside,
the ties/mounts are torn,
hardship is growing,
she knows that the flocks sing,
I look forward, even further,
to the end of the powers,
the destiny of the victorious god.

This verse is connected to *Kauna* and *Svartr*. This winter spirits and Hel's shadows flow unimpeded from the underworld.

55

Then comes the mighty
son of the victorious father
the forest (*Víðarr*) walks
against the fallen animals.
He let the storm's (*Loki's*) powers
answer
sword to the heart,
then the father is avenged.

This verse is connected to *Gebo* and *Heimdallr*. Out there in the forest the winter spirits meet the gods, and with the help of the gifts from the dead, the weapons of the ancestors, which *Heimdallr* came with on the Winter Solstice. The gods kill *Fenrir* in the forest, and thus *Víðarr* (the forest) avenges his father's death and restores balance in nature.

4.9 Hagall's third Group of eight

56

Then came the honoured
the sound's (Jörð's) son (i. e. Þórr)
the mind's (Óðinn's) son went
to fight the worm
killed him with courage
the sacred rain of the world in the middle
he clears all halls
in the inhabited world;
walks nine feet
carries to the mountain
the degradation of the worm
infamous refrain.

This verse is connected to *Hagalaz* and *Ægir*. The king, who represented Þórr, struck the mistletoe down with a hammer, from where it had been hung in the Yule. He did the same in all houses (halls) where the mistletoe had been hung. The nine feet he walked were the journey from the living room to the burial mound, and Þórr didn't really die, he just had to carry the mistletoe to and put it back in the burial mound, the underworld.

57

The Sun turns black
the Earth sinks into the sea
thrown from the sky
bright stars;
sparks sprays
and the fire is
playing tall and hot
by the sky itself.

This verse is connected to *Naupi* and *Norns*. When the mistletoe was back in the burial mound, the battle continued. The gods charged through the night armed with torches, threw sticks into the fires and let the sparks spurt in the woods. They defeated and chased away the winter spirits.



Thor oder Thunar. Nach Prof. C. E. Doepler.

Romantic Image of Þórr, by C. E. Doepler.

58

The swallower is barking loudly,
in front of the cave leaning over the hillside,
the ties/mounts are torn,
hardship is growing,
she knows that the flocks sing,
I look forward, even further,
to the end of the powers,
the destiny of the victorious god.

This verse is connected to *Isaz* and *Hel*. This winter spirits and *Hel* shadows are defeated, and can be sent back to *Hel*, the same way as they had come, through the burial mound.

59

She sees rising
on the other side
land from the sea
green again
waterfalls
eagle flying above
the one who on the mountains
catches fish.

This verse is connected to *Jera* and *Íwaz*, *Freyja* and *Skaði*. Because of this victory at *Ragnarök*, one could see that the spring and summer were coming back. Life and strength returned to the world.

60

The spirits find
on the ground on the backwater field
and talks about the old Earth
the destiny of the powers,
and remember there
great things
and the great god's
old secrets.

This verse is connected to *Perþi* and *Váli*. The gods rode to the burial mound and sacrificed a horse, on *Hel's Horse*, the 11th day of *Sökkvabekkr*, the month of the goddess of wisdom, *Saga*, and held a feast. They talked about what had happened and told stories about their deeds in the past.

61

There they will later
strange
golden tablets
find in the grass,
which in the old days
were possessions of their kin.

This verse is connected to *Perþi* and *Váli*. It appears that the gifts *Heimdallr* brought with him from the underworld, were not all delivered at the Winter Solstice, but that some were hidden away until after *Ragnarök*. Perhaps the gold artefacts were placed in the snow, so that they would not be found until after the snow had melted, in the grass on the burial mound. It was gold after all, and gold would not suffer from such treatment.

62

With no sowing
the fields will grow
bad luck will be better
Baldr will come;
live there *Höðr* and *Baldr*
Hrofts (*Óðinn's*) victory fields
selected by the fallen/chosen gods.
Do you still know enough, or what?

This verse is connected to *Algiz* and *Víðarr*. The meadow and the forest got their power back. The flowers peeked up from the Earth, the leaves grew on trees and grass on the ground. Summer had returned.

63

Then the tempter (Freyr) chose
blood wood
and started to build
the double's brothers
wide wind world.
Do you still know enough or what?

This verse is linked to *Sowili* and the Sun. The light returned to the sky.

64

She saw a hall stand
decorated on the Sun
covered with gold
on the sea of gems;
there the skilled/capable
kings should build
and in the days of life
enjoy.

This verse is linked to *Sowili* and Sun. The power returned to the Sun. The winners of the bride races – the kings (sorcerers) – should rule the world, wisely.

4.10 Týr's third Group of eight

65.

Then comes the mighty
to the meeting of the powers
powerful from above
everyone's ruler.

This verse is connected to *Tíwaz* and Týr. Finally, the king (sorcerer) could rule the world, in peace and harmony. The sorcerer was the ruler of the world, and when the sorcerer became a god instead he also took the role of the world ruler; the Sky god Týr.

66

There comes the dark
dragon flying
sharp, shining from below
from beneath the mountains
clearly we see the claws
fly over the plain
the thrust from the corpse from below
now she will sink down.

This verse is connected to *Berko* and *Jörð*. Finally we get a warning that *Höðr*/*Fenrir*/*Jörmungandr* once again will come back from the Earth's womb, from beneath the burial mound, and attack from below. We see the bright mistletoe (the dragon/worm) in the wolf's claws. It is ready to kill Baldr again ...

This is the last verse in *Völuspá*.



Tyr, der Schwertgott.
Zeichnung von Prof. C. E. Doepler.

Romantic Image of Týr, by C. E. Doepler.

5.0 THE MYSTERY CHAMBER

5.1 The Hiding Place of the Dead

We have heard much about the burial mound, surrounded by a fence and overgrown with bushes and trees, and we have learned that it and or its interior/exterior is called Íðavöllr ("backwater plain"), Miðgarðr ("the garden in the middle"), Níðavöllr ("the plain below"), Hel ("death", or "hide"), *dvergr* ("door-opening in the ground"), Niflheimr ("fog world"), Urðarbrunnr ("the well of esteem", "stone well"), Mímisbrunnr ("well of reminiscence") and so on, and we know it from Greek mythology as Hades ("unseen", "hidden") and by other names from other mythologies. The most famous Scandinavian name of this place is perhaps Valhöll.

Valhöll ("hall of the chosen/fallen", or "hidden chosen/fallen") was Óðinn's hall. This hall had walls made of spears, the roof was covered with shields and the benches were adorned with mail. Half of all the nobles who died in battle came to Valhöll, after being selected by the Valkyries. The other half came to Freyja's hall, Sessrýmnir ("roomy seat"), most likely a picture of the sky, dedicated to those who were burned on a funeral pyre (a "brising"). Other than those of Jarl's kin (i. e. the blonde, light skinned and fair-eyed men) were not welcome either place, and we recognised here the nobility's contempt for ordinary peasants and slaves, or perhaps rather the racist attitudes of the ancient European.

In addition to the fact that only men and women of Jarl's kin were welcome in Valhöll, only the wolves known as Geri ("perfect", "full", "good") and Freki ("hard", "string", "strife") were allowed to eat by Óðinn's side in the hall. So the only ones who had access were those who had won the bride races, the kings (sorcerers), who were travelling to the burial mound to learn the secrets, and only the old (replaced) queens (sorceresses) who had to teach them the secrets they needed to know to be kings.

The sorcerer's spells and verses teach us a lot about Valhöll. A wolf hangs above the entrance, and above the hall an eagle bends its head. Outside there was a grove called Glasir ("make excellent"), whose leaves were of pure red gold. The field surrounding the hall was fenced in and had a very old gate. Very few knew how to open this gate. In addition, three rivers, Pundr ("elevated"), which was also a name for Óðinn, Valglaumr ("noisy chosen/fallen ones") and Ífing ("un-

certainty", "doubt") kept intruders out. The fish of Þjóðvitnir ("wolf people", "wolf pack") swam in these rivers. The current was so strong that not even Sleipnir could cross the rivers. On the roof of the hall a goat called Heiðrún ("light secret") stood, and she ate from a tree called Hlæráðr ("obey Óðinn/the mind", "listen to Óðinn/the mind", or "sea of Óðinn/the mind", "spirit sea"). A river of clear mead flowed from this goat's teats. Mead filled up a bowl which stood on the ground. It was so big that the warriors could drink as much as they wanted without fear that it would run out of mead. They used the skulls to drink from. A deer, Eikþyrnir ("protective oak", "oak surrounded by thorns"), stood on the ground and ate from Hlæráðr's branches. Thirty six rivers flowed from its antlers and down into the well Hvergelmir ("year old draft"). Twelve for the gods, twelve for men and twelve for the dead.

We do not know the names of all these rivers, but we know the names of the twelve which ran down Hvergelmir for the dead; Svöl ("cool"), Gunnþrá ("yearning for battle/strife"), Form ("form"), Fimbul ("great", "powerful"), Pul ("verse", "long string of words"), Slíðr ("cruel"), Hríðr ("storm", "bad weather"), Sylgr ("drink", or "fire eater"), Ýlgr ("the howling"), Við ("forest"), Leiptr ("shine", "light") and Gjöll ("sound", "call", "echo").

Warriors in the hall ate only meat from the boar Sæhrímnir ("sea hostility"), which was prepared by the chef Andhrímnir ("spirit hostility") every day in the pan Eldhrímnir ("fire hostility"). The boar was slaughtered every night and then rose from the dead the following morning. There were only a few who understood what the combatants' nutrition was really made up of.

Most of the symbolism of the myth of Valhöll is quite obvious to us when we know as much as we do at this time. A holy warrior, a sorcerer/god, had sacrificed a wolf by the entrance to the hall, and had hung his clothes in a tree that grew on top of the burial mound; an eagle (a spirit shape) bowed its head, because it was hung. The rivers surrounding the hall, where the wolf pack (called fish) prevented unwelcome visitors from coming in, was a party consisting of already initiated men (the berserks). They would keep out those who were not welcome in the burial mound; only those of Jarl's kin were allowed access. Those who were not welcome could not even disguise themselves ("ride Sleipnir", the Trojan horse,) to get across the river to the burial mound. They would be stopped, ransacked and interrogated by the "fish" before they got that far. All doubts about the visitor's right to be there had to be removed.

By the entrance to the Meters ("mother") sanctuary in Phaistos on Crete, we find an inscription that suggests that they also elsewhere in Europe had the same strict control over who could or could not have access to the Chamber of Secrets. There is written a declaration that the goddess, who offers a great miracle to anyone who can guarantee their descent, refuses to listen to the prayers of those who unjustly force their way into the divine family. We also know that the initiates of Hades were forced to provide a statement that, "I am son of Earth and of the starlit Sky", which can be interpreted as a guarantee that the initiate was son of a queen and a king who personified the Earth goddess and the Sky god, the two most important deities. He guaranteed that he was of noble family.

One of the reasons for the strict control in Scandinavia, where they primarily used the burial mound as Chamber of Secrets, was probably that they would ensure that valuable objects in the family tomb was not taken by someone other than their own relatives, not to mention that the queen/wife who was waiting inside the tomb should not teach and entertain complete strangers. Many places in Europe they used a house as a Chamber of Secrets instead, where many could enter at the same time, after having brought the key (the mistletoe or some other wand) and had given the correct *synthemata* ("password"). They were initiated all at once, but rather than participate in any mystic plays the uninitiated in these houses only observed what happened between the king and queen, or high priest and high priestess, who taught them the secrets, with *mythos* ("stories") and *logos* ("speech"). Mystery religion never evolved in this way in Scandinavia due to the simple fact that they had more than enough burial mounds for every king/sorcerer in the scarcely populated Scandinavia.

The fact that Valhöll was made up of weapons and armour can be explained by the fact that the dead were buried with all their military equipment. Originally they were sitting in their grave, but with time they were placed to rest in a lying down position. The goat Heiðrún was a picture of the bright and beautiful sorceress/goddess, who was to teach them the secrets, or the beast that was slaughtered on the grave mound so that the blood flowed down into the grave below. If the sorcerer/god drank the blood, he would learn the art of poetry. The fact that they used skulls to drink from suggests that this mead was actually knowledge and that they, rather than actually drinking something, just filled up their heads with knowledge. The deer Eikþyrnir was certainly the oak god Baldr and/or his wife Nanna, who are surrounded by thorns and because of that cannot get away. They were the Sleeping Beauty, sleeping in the grave, waiting for their rescue.

The names of the twelve rivers that flowed into the Hvergelmir are for us a repetition of something we already know, namely, it is a description of a sorcerer's/god's journey into the underworld and what happens there; the hunt for Höðr and the final battle of Ragnarök. The cold autumn, the warrior without form, because his clothes are hanging in the sacrificial tree, the mighty god (Óðinn) who is impersonated, verses learned in the grave, the cruel hunting of bears and wolves, autumn weather, Fenrir who charges forward, howling wolves in the forest, the fire used to kill them, and finally the Gjallarhorn sounding every year.

Inside the grave the warriors were strengthened by the hostility they were met with, when they met the difficult and hard sorceress/goddess. They had to first soften her up, by giving her the correct password and showing to her the key (the mistletoe) that they had brought with them. She would become friendly only when they did this. He had to learn the secret verses she taught him and to know them perfectly in order to advance in his education. Each verse learned by him was the password needed to be given to her for her to teach him more.

Warriors in Valhöll gather outside each day, to fight and die. They are revived and the next day re-enter Valhöll and are given more nutrition. The initiation lasted three days and nights, and each day they had to leave the grave, maybe to rehearse and memorize the verses and other secrets learnt inside. They then had to "die" again, every day to gain access to Valhöll. After the third day they were ready to start the hunt for Höðr/Fenrir.

6.0 THE VOICE OF THE FOREFATHERS

6.1 The Eggjum Stone

There are many interesting archaeological finds which support my hypotheses and interpretations. The oldest are probably the cave paintings found in France, in Chauvet, in Ardèche and Lascaux, which are respectively about 35.000, 20.000 and 10.000 years old, where sorcerers with great skill have painted hunting scenes on the cave walls, probably as part of hunting spells. Another ancient evidence of the European religion's old age is a 5000 year old burial mound in Ireland called Newgrange ("new house"), but originally called Sid in Bruca ("the entrance to the underworld"), where at each Sunrise on the Winter Solstice the Sunlight shines into the innermost chamber. Everywhere in Europe we have, from the Stone Age to the Iron Age, evidence which can be understood in context with the ancient religion. In Scandinavia we have up to 6200 year old rock carvings and remains of men and women from the Bronze- and Iron Age found murdered and immersed in bogs. We have everything from burial mounds, ship graves and rock carvings to runic inscriptions. All of this can be understood in the light of the ancient religion.

Runic inscriptions are all from the late Iron Age, and the most interesting one is undoubtedly from a rune stone found in Eggjum in Western Norway, in proto-Nordic:

*ni's solu sot uk ni sākse stāin skorin
ni (????) maR nākda ni sn(?)r(??)R
ni wiltiR manR lāgi (??)
hin wārb nāseu maR
māde þaim kâibā i bormopā huni
huwaR ob kam hārias hi a lat gotnā
fiskr oR f(??)nā uim swuimade
foki i f(?)a(??) (???) gālande
alu misurki*



Romantic Image of Bragi (i. e. Baldr), by C. E. Doepler.

Translated from proto-Nordic to Norse this becomes:

ní es sólu sótt ok ní saxi steinn skorinn
ní (????) maðr nakða ní sn(a)r(áð)r
ní viltir menn lægi (??)
hin varp násjó maðr
móði þeim keipa í bármóða húni
hver of kom herjáss hí á land gotna
fiskr ór f(or)na vim svimmandi
fákr í f(j)á(nda) (lið) galandi
öl missyrki

In English this is:

*This stone is not burned by the Sun or cut with seax
not (???) undressed human being, not resourceful/wise
man does not wish to lie (???)
they threw corpse-sea (i. e. blood) over human
their strength travelled in boat (in/across) her strong river
from whence came a god of war from a bear's lair in the land of the gods
fish swimming from old (???)
horse screaming in pack of enemies
dangerous feast*

When we know the New Year and Yule mysteries like we do now the runic inscription becomes understandable. The Sun did not shine on the runes, for when they did the runes lost their power. This was something that was said in the Viking era, and which today is interpreted literally. However, it may well be that it really meant that the secrets should not be revealed in the Sunlight, i. e. *in public*, but only inside the darkness of the grave.

The runes were not cut with iron tools. Perhaps it was thought originally only that the secrets should not be recorded (and thus be easily learnt by anyone who knew how to read), but instead they should only be memorized by specific individuals. This rule may have been misunderstood later on, perhaps as early as in the Iron Age.

The Eggjum stone had neither been cut with iron tools nor exposed to Sunlight. An undressed man had to be someone who had hung his clothes in the sacred

tree, and thus disguised himself as Óðinn, here called Snaráðir ("resourceful", "wise"). He was not Óðinn/Snaráðr, but pretended to be, in order to gain access to the realm of the dead. We can all understand that no man wanted to lie in the grave, whether this was the man or the woman waiting inside for him. The corpse-sea, i. e. the blood, was the blood from the animals they slaughtered on the burial mound, dripping into the chamber inside.

The strength travelling in or across her (Hel's) river, through strong currents, is Baldr, who died and was sent to the underworld in a boat.

Then came the sorcerer/Váli (the chosen, who had become a god), born from the grave (the bear's lair in the land of the gods), the realm of the dead.

The swimming fish were the berserks, known from the myth about Valhöll as Þjóðvitnir's fish, standing guard, to prevent unworthy men from entering. The sorcerers/Váli lead a procession of initiates, riding from farm to farm, across the land, screaming, shouting, hunting and wielding torches, to kill the winter spirits. They were the disguised men, the Trojan horse, who fought in the dangerous battle of Ragnarök; the dangerous feast.

We don't know why this rune stone was made, nor do we know why it was found with the runes pointing down to the ground. Perhaps it was done to prevent unworthy ones from reading the runes. Perhaps it was shown only to those who were to learn these secrets.

6.2 Ívarr Ellison

Archaeology supports my theories, but also folk songs, and I want to provide you with an example; a song about Ívarr Ellison (younger name of the song is Ivar Elison). This is a medieval Norwegian song about a young man who was sent to school and who read books. His father had been killed with weapons, and no one had yet demanded vengeance. Someone then asked for vengeance. Ívarr was at school, because the priests wanted him to study. He then went to the playing field and played ball with his friends, until they were both blue and yellow (i. e. bruised badly). This was no game for women. They then sat down and the boys were angry at him for not having avenged his father's murder. Ívarr went into the stone room where he met his mother, and asked for the truth about where his father had gone. She picked up a silver ball and was very pale, before she said that his father had planned to give him this as a weapon. A horse waited for him in the stable, with grey fax, that had never been ridden before, according to his father. His father's bloodied shirt was hanging outside on the stone wall, she said, and she could tell that it had not been used since his father had been killed. Ívarr wondered if he had to go to church the next day and see his father's murderer, but he did not. He had to take two of his relatives, Pétr (the Greek name Peter, "rock", "cut") and Jon (the Hebrew name Johanan, "god is gracious"). You have to remember that this is a song recorded in Christian times. The three mounted their horses and rode away, and by the castle gate Ívarr turned toward his mother and said to her that she had to live well. The mother turned away in tears, and failed to answer her son.

When Ívarr and his entourage came to the murderer's farm he was told by the murderer that he knew Ívarr's horse, but not the rider. Was it perhaps Ívarr El-lison who came home from school? They dismounted their horses and went inside. Ívarr smiled and said to his father's murderer:

*Heill sitir þú, Hermóðr illi,
alls undir þitt gúla hár.
Munt þú nökkut kunnigr vera
hverr minn föður vá?*

*Glad you are sitting, Hermóðr the bad,
under your yellow hair.
Do you know (anything about)
who killed my father?*

Sure, maybe he knew who had killed his father, and he thought it was late to come for vengeance. Ívarr was a capable man, but said he would ride with his company to church and not talk about it. Hermóðr wanted no peace for Ívarr and told his men that they should ride with him after Ívarr and kill him and his



Image from Vendel. Possibly two Warriors engaged in a Duel.

company. Ívarr saw them coming and asked his men if they wanted to run away. They did not want to run and instead charged their assailants. Pétur cut two of them from their horses and they fell dead to the ground. Ívarr drew his sword from its sheath and attacked with all strength. He split the shield and mail and Hermóðr was cut in two halves by the navel. Ívarr and his relatives rode home happy from the desolate woods, where six men were left wounded and seven dead.

Back home Ívarr's mother Elli ("old age", "old days") saw that he was bleeding, and thought that it would be better if he had stayed home and healed his wounds. Good health was important, she said. He had received the wounds in combat, and was happy he had. Elli went to the stone room, mixed mead and wine and brought it to the three waiting on the hayloft.

This song was not a song of vengeance in medieval Norway, but about Ívarr ("archer") Ellison; the archer was a son of the past. Ívarr was a capable man, who won the bride race, the dangerous ball game that was not for women. He was thus a chosen, a king/sorcerer. His father, Óðinn, was killed during Ragnarök and this Ívarr had to avenge. He got his weapons from the goddess of death, who in the song was his mother, waiting in the stone room (the grave). His father's belongings had been buried with him, and now Ívarr went in to the grave to collect them. He rode disguised as his father, with uncut hair and a bloodied shirt on – to prove to the guardians of the grave that he was dead and should be let in. Ívarr challenged Hermóðr and his men, who sat with the hair covering their faces, and rode out into the desolate woods, to Víðarr ("forest"), where the battle was to take place. They cut down Hermóðr and the other berserks, who had their hair (bear hides and wolf furs) hanging down over their faces and therefore were blinded, like Höðr. They drank mead and wine, on The Day of Eldbjørg ("fire-rescue"), to celebrate that Ragnarök was over and that Óðinn's death had been avenged. The Sun would again get its strength back.

6.3 The Love of the Grave

The fairy tales are the longest surviving Pagan stories in Europe. In Christian times they were seen as “unchristian” and were therefore told in secret. Maids and servants often told these tales to children as bedtime stories, without their parents knowing about it. The most widely-known fairy tale is the one about Cinderella (“old ash”), that we know in various forms from almost all cultures across Eurasia.

Cinderella was marked from birth; her mother died when Cinderella was born. She was a sweet and hard-working girl who was badly treated by her step sisters and her stepmother. She slept in the ash (ashes?), and was therefore called Cinderella. When her father went away one day she asked if he could not bring back the first branch that fell down on his hat. He came back and gave her a branch from the hazel tree. She took it to her mother’s grave, placed it on the grave and cried, watering the branch with her tears. It grew up and became a mighty bush. A pigeon sat down in the bush and told her that she could have three wishes granted.

When a ball was held in the king’s palace everyone was invited, but Cinderella was not allowed by her stepmother to go. She begged and begged her for permission to go, and eventually the mother took a shovel with grain and poured it into the ash(es), and said that if Cinderella was able to pick up every grain in the course of two hours she would be allowed to go to the ball. Cinderella asked the pigeons for help and within an hour all the grains were back on the shovel. She was however still not allowed to go. She went to the pigeons again and asked them for a beautiful white dress with a veil for the face, and she went to the ball anyway. The prince at the ball did not pay any attention to Cinderella’s sisters, and instead he danced with Cinderella all evening. The same thing happened the second day, and the third. The first two days the prince wanted to take her back home, but did not find her, but the third day she lost one of her shoes. The prince picked it up and went looking for her. When the prince came to the farm where Cinderella lived her step sisters cut their heels off, in an attempt to fit into the shoe, but they did not. Pigeons landed on the prince’s shoulder and whispered to him that it was not them he was looking for. Finally the Prince found Cinderella and he kissed her.

This fairy tale naturally deals with the New Year and the Yule mystery. A sacred branch was used to open up the grave. This branch was Bölporn, the dead Baldr.



Romantic Image of Íðunn, by C. E. Doepler.

When it was watered by the tears of the goddess it grew up and became a mighty tree once again. We know the tears as Bölþorns daughter, Bestla (“the best liquid”, “the best water”), who gave life to the gods. We know the same tears of the mound from both Völuspá and the song about Ívarr Ellison. In Völuspá, verse 33;

*en Frigg um grét
í Fensölum.*

*but Frigg wept
in the fenced in hall.*

In the song about Ívarr Ellison he turned to his mother when he rode through the castle gate, and said to her that she had to live well. She turned away in tears and was unable to answer him. Cinderella was the goddess who waited in the ancestral ashes and wept for Baldr. The fact that our forebears sometimes and in some places burned the dead to ashes did not change anything in the old religion; the ashes were scattered over or mixed with the soil, so that the dead would come back – like plants from a seed.

Cinderella wanted to go to the dance, but was not allowed to by her stepmother, who poured seeds into the ash(es). This may seem somewhat strange, but we know that in ancient Scandinavia they often placed a pot with seeds or pebbles (symbolizing seeds) next to the heads of the dead when they were placed in the grave. The reason for this was that they did not want malevolent spirits (trolls) to seize the bodies and turn the dead to undead creatures, who wandered around in the night and killed and drank blood from the living. Fortunately the trolls were really stupid, and could not count to more than three. Trolls were drawn to the life force, and also to the life force found in seeds. When seeds (or pebbles looking like seeds) were placed in a pot next to the heads of the dead the trolls would be too busy counting them to be able to possess the dead body. Whenever they counted three seeds/pebbles they had to start over again, and thus were kept busy for all eternity. This gave the dead the opportunity to rest in peace. Cinderella was not a troll, and could therefore easily overcome this obstacle, when she was to impersonate (and thus “become”) the dead.

She dressed herself up to look like a corpse and went to the tomb, where she met and slept with the prince (sorcerer).

In the fairy tale she didn’t sleep with, but instead danced with, the prince. How-

ever, dancing in pairs like they do in the fairy tale was originally a symbolic intercourse, where they found out if they got along well physically before they married, without actually having to sleep with each other to find out. So whether they dance or sleep together makes no difference; it symbolizes an intercourse. They dance (sleep together) because she has to teach the prince the secrets of love, for him to be able to know what to do when he marries his princess/queen. The kiss is the sharing of the spirit; the esoteric transfer of knowledge from one individual to another. This is also why we know the runes to be carved on Baldr’s tongue.

We know that Cinderella is already a sorceress willing and ready to initiate the prince (after the third dance, when she knows he is worthy and when he has passed her test), because she tells him this by wearing only one shoe. The sorcerers and sorceresses did this and because of that walked with a limp, or they actually hurt their own foot (like Cinderella’s step sisters did), to walk with a limp, because they *had to* in order to impersonate the spirit/god who kills the winter spirits in Ragnarök; Víðarr is known to kill Fenrir/Höðr by placing his foot inside the mouth of the beast and then tearing it to bits and pieces. When he does this he burns his foot, because the wolf breathes fire. Walking with a limp was in other words a proof you were in fact a sorcerer/sorceress and that you had passed the final initiation; by killing the winter spirits on Ragnarök.

From history we know this custom only vaguely, from the witch trials where they credited this limp to being a result of the devil’s one horse or goat foot. There was no devil, of course; only a sorcerer with a limp. We also know it from Ancient Greece; one of the Greek tribes there used to walk into battle wearing only one shoe, and this terrified their enemies. Of course it did; their enemies thought they were facing an army of sorcerers! They had even at the time when this was recorded, some time in Antiquity, forgotten exactly why these men had done this, though. Greece had been a religious country for a long time already, and the old traditions were often forgotten even then.

The prince was not fooled by the sorceress’ step sisters (who also walked with a limp, after cutting off their own heels), and he took no interest in them at the ball. I cannot tell why this is, but I can assume that this was the case because Cinderella was the youngest and most beautiful, the only one who slept in the ashes of the grave, the only one with a key (the hazel branch), and the only one who wore a white (“elvish”) dress (i. e. the clothes of the dead) and a veil. To be able to see the spirits of nature the sorcerers and sorceresses had to wear some sort

of mask – or a veil. Perhaps the sorceress had two assistants inside the grave as well, who played a lesser part in the initiation mystery. Sorceresses often work in groups of three in our culture, but the prince only had to relate to one of them.

There are many such fairy tales, which are obvious descriptions of the New Year and the Yule mystery. The best examples, in addition to *Cinderella*, are probably the story of *The Miller Boy and the Cat*, *The Two Wanderers*, *The Poor and the Rich*, and of course the stories of *Sleeping Beauty*, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, *The Princess who could not be put to Silence* and *Mother Holle*. Many fairy tales have been converted, and the European god, Heimdallr, Þórr, Óðinn or another, has often been replaced by the Christian god, but this does not change the content of the fairy tales, and we can still learn a lot about the European religion from them.

One thing that we see in many fairy tales is that the bad always get what they deserve. Those who travel to the mound and try to be initiated but who do not belong there, are punished for it. Whether this was an extension of the desire to exclude all others than those of Jarl's kin, or an elaboration of Heimdallr's tasks, we do not know. Heimdallr was assigned to educate Jarl's kin and teach them to be good children. Bad children received only ash; lye to wash themselves with. In the traditional tales they receive soap (lye), but in the fairy tales they were lucky if they even kept their lives. This can be explained by the fact that the fairy tales were long told in a Judeo-Christian world, where concepts such as punishment and shame permeated the Judeo-Christian man's twisted and troubled mind.

EPILOGUE

Völuspá was in other words not a creation story. There was no war between two different divine families, *æsir* and *vanir*, and man was not created by two lifeless and human-like pieces of wood from ash and elm, found on the beach. Lif ("life") and Lífþrasir ("holding on to life") were not two humans who survived Ragnarök, but Nanna and Baldr who after the winter returned from the dead. Ragnarök was no more dramatic than it was a necessary, useful, and annual event. All powers were always born again after they had been killed.

There was no linear (i. e. Judeo-Christian) world view in Ancient Europe, but rather a circular (i. e. European) world view, with no beginning and no end. Everything in nature just repeats itself, and the European mythology acknowledges this fact. *Alvíssmál*, *Grímnismál*, *Hávamál*, *Hymiskviða*, *Lokasenna*, *Rígstula*, *Völuspá* and all the others songs, known and unknown, were simply the old tradition, which they turned into verses in order to memorize them. They had to know them in order to rule and reign over their peoples as queens and kings. They were the passwords and the keys to power, a description of the mysteries and their secrets.

In spite of the fact that the ancient European religion was a pure hunter-gatherer and agriculture-based religion, built like all religions are on ignorance and delusions, and in spite of the fact that it was devoid of any and all twisted notions of "good versus evil", punishment, sin and empty promises of salvation, there was a moral element to it. Honour meant everything to the ancient European man, and he was seen as honourable when he was magnanimous, witty, wise, kind, resourceful, gentle and just no less than when he was faithful, beautiful, healthy, strong, skilful, brave, careless and merciless. Of all our ancestral beliefs this is perhaps the one to remember and value today, and to bring with us into the future.

NAME INDEX

A

Ánarr (proto-Nordic **Anaraz*): “the other”. See Ymir.
Aphrodite: “born from foam”. Greek name for Freyja.
Apollo: “strength” or “to destroy”. Greek name for Baldr.
Ares: “fall”, “destruction”, “downfall”. Greek name for Týr.
Artemis: “to slay”, “slaughter”, or “safe”, “secure”. Greek name for Skaði.
Asklepios: “cut up”. Greek name for Baldr.
Athene: “mind of the gods”. Greek name for Sága.
Atropos: “inevitable”. Greek name for Skuld.
Auðhumbla (proto-Nordic **Auðhumblon*): “silence”, or “weak sound”.
Austr (proto-Nordic **Austaz*): “be light”, “bright”. Norse name for Eos.

B

Bakkos: “to shout”. See Dionysos.
Baldr/Ballr (proto-Nordic **Balþuz*): “shining white body”, “ball”, “bulging, round and strong body.” Norse name for Apollo, Asklepios, and Hemera. Also called Bragi, Lífþrasir and Dagr.
Borr/Burr (proto-Nordic **Buraz*): “start”, “equip”, “carry forward”. Norse name for Prometheus. Also called Maðr.
Bragi (proto-Nordic **Bragan*): “shine”, later also “poetry”, “poet”, “the best”, “the chief”, “the first”. See Baldr.
Buri (proto-Nordic **Buran*): “roar (of angry bulls)” or “carried forward”, “born”. See Týr.
Bölþorn (proto-Nordic **Balaborn*): “painful thorn”, “bad branch,” “bad shoot”. Norse name for Typhon. Also called Jörmungandr, Níðhögg, Þjazi and Þrýmr.

D

Dagr (proto-Nordic **Dagaz*): “heavenly light”, later also “meeting”, “life”, “limit”, “day”. See Baldr.
Demeter: “corn-mother”. Greek name for Jörð.
Dionysos: “twice born”. Greek name for Freyr. Also called Bakkos.

E

Eos: “dawn”, light”. Greek name for Austr.
Elgr (proto-Nordic **Algiz*): “elk”, “deer”, “deer”. See Víðarr.
Eros: “love”. Greek name for Freyr.

F

Fenrir (proto-Nordic **Fanjarjaz*): “fenced in rider”, “fenced in plague”. See Höðr.
Fjörgyn (proto-Nordic **Fergunio*): “mountain”. Norse name for Gaia.
Forseti (proto-Nordic **Furasitan*): “intense fire” or “chairman”, “judge”. See Týr.
Freyja (proto-Nordic **Fraujon*): “spare”, “free”, “love”. Norse name for Aphrodite and Hera. Also called Frigg, Hlin/Hlín and Vanadís.
Freyr (proto-Nordic **Fraujaz*): “spare”, “free”, “love”. Norse name for Dionysos and Eros. Also called Hænir, Véi and Yngvinn.
Frigg (proto-Nordic **Frijjo*): “spare”, “free”, “love”. Norse name for Hera and Leto. See Freyja.

G

Gaia: “Earth”. Greek name for Fjörgyn.
Gerðr (proto-Nordic **Gerbjoz*): “fenced in field”. See Jörð.
Gunnlöð (proto-Nordic **Gunþalaþo*): “invitation to fight”. See Hel.
Gymir (proto-Nordic **Gumijaz*): “fire”, “gem”, or “ocean”. See Ægir.

H

Hades: “unseen”, “hidden”. Greek name for Höðr and Hel. Also known as Pluto.
Heimdallr (proto-Nordic **Haimadalþaz*): “world tree”, “tree above the bed”. Norse name for Kronos and Iris. Also called Hermóðr and Yggdrasill.
Hel (proto-Nordic **Haljo*): “dead”, or “hide”. Norse name for Hades. Also called Gunnlöð and Rindr.
Helios: “Sun”. Greek name for Sunna.
Hemera: “day”. Greek name for Baldr.
Hephaistos: “bright flash of lightning”. Greek name for Loki.
Hera: “the chosen”. Greek name for Frigg and Jörð.
Herakles: “the honour of the chosen,” “the pride of the chosen”. Greek name for Þórr and Váli.
Hermes: “cain”. Greek name for Óðinn and Loki.
Hermóðr (proto-Nordic **Harmawopaz*): “Óðinn impersonator”, “spirit impersonator”. See Heimdallr.
Hestia: “hearth”. Greek name for Sunna.
Hlin/Hlín (proto-Nordic **Hlino*): “maple”. See Freyja.
Hymir (proto-Nordic **Humijaz*): “hymn”, “song of praise”. See Ymir.
Hænir (proto-Nordic **Honijaz*): “lure (with singing)”, “lure”, “give signs”. See Freyr.
Höðr/Hötr/Hattr (proto-Nordic **Hadnuz*): “hat”, “hood,” “helmet”. Norse name for Hades. Also called Fenrir, Mánagarmr and Ullr.

I

Íðunn (proto-Nordic **Ípund*): “eager”, “sustainable”, “who likes to work”, “diligent”, “effective”, or “recurrent work”. Norse name for Persephone. Also called Nanna and Líf.

Iris: “rainbow”. Greek name for Heimdallr.

Ívarr (proto-Nordic **Íwaz* or **Íwanaz*): “yew”, “bow”, “archer”. See Skaði.

J

Jörð (proto-Nordic **Erþi*): “Earth”, “soil”. Norse name for Rhea, Demeter, Hera, and Kybele. Also known as Sif and Gerðr.

Jörmungandr (proto-Nordic **Ermunagandaz*): “the tremendous staff,” “animated staff” or “animated great cattle”, “animated proto-ox”. See Bölpörn.

K

Kloris: “green”. See Persephone.

Klotho: “spinner”. Greek name for Verðandi.

Kore: “girl”, “maiden”, “virgin”. See Persephone.

Kronos: “time”. Greek name for Heimdallr.

Kybele: “from mountain”. See Rhea.

L

Lachesis: “distributor”. Greek name for Urðr.

Leto: “woman”, “wife”. Greek name for Frigg.

Líf (proto-Nordic **Hlíþjo*): “life”. See Íðunn.

Lífprasir (proto-Nordic **Hlíþaprasijaz*): “who hold on to life”. See Baldr.

Lóðurr (proto-Nordic **Hlápunaz*): “he who stacks up”, “load (ships)”, or “attach to” and “hang together”. See Þórr.

Loki: (proto-Nordic **Lukan*): “lightning”. Norse name for Hephaistos and Hermes. Also called Nárfi/Nörvi.

M

Maðr/Mann (proto-Nordic **Mannz*): “man”, originally “thinking”. See Borr.

Maia: “good mother”. Greek name for Njörðr.

Mánagarmr (proto-Nordic **Managarmaz*): “Moon eater”, or “Moon swallower”. See Höðr.

Mani (proto-Nordic **Manan*): “measure”, “heaven wanderer”. Norse name for Selene.

N

Nanna (proto-Nordic **Nanþan*): “zeal”, “resourceful”, “eager to work”, “rush”. See Íðunn.

Nárfi (proto-Nordic **Narwan*): “corpse”, “dead body”, “death”. Norse name for Hermes. See Loki.

Nátt (proto-Nordic **Nahti*): “dead”, “the dead”, “night”. Norse names for Nyx.

Níðhöggr (proto-Nordic **Níþahjjuz*): “thrust from below”, “slaughter from below”, “strike from below”, “hiding from below”, or “deceitful blow”, “slaying cut” et cetera. See Bölpörn.

Njörðr (proto-Nordic **Nerþuz*): “bottom”, “left”, “favourable”, i. e. “beneficial power from below”. Norse name for Poseidon and Maia. Njörðr was a goddess, but was in the Viking Age known as a god.

Nyx: “night”. Greek name for Nátt.

O

Óðinn (proto-Nordic **Wōpanaz*): “thinking”, “mind”, “spirit”, “fury”. Norse name for Uranos and Hermes. Has several hundred different nicknames.

Okeanos: “river”. Greek name for Ægir.

P

Pan: “shepherd”. Greek name for Víðarr.

Persephone: “destructive murder.” Greek name for Íðunn. Also known as Kore and Kloris.

Pluto: “wealth”. See Hades.

Poseidon: “Earth’s husband”, “lord of the Earth”. Greek name for Njörðr.

Prometheus: “far-sighted”. Greek name for Borr.

R

Rhea: “power”, “floating”. Greek name for Jörð. Also called Kybele.

Rindr (proto-Nordic **Rindijoz*): “ditch”, “riverbed”, “channel in the ground”. See Hel.

S

Saga (proto-Nordic **Sagon*): “teller”. Norse name for Athene.

Selene: “light”. Greek name for Mani.

Sif (proto-Nordic **Sibjo*): “reed”. See Jörð.

Skaði (proto-Nordic **Skanþan*): “jump”, “climb”. Norse name for Artemis. Also called Ívarr, Veiði-ass and Öndurgoð/Önduráss. Skaði was a god, but was in the Viking Age known as a goddess, and was also called Öndurdís: “procession-goddess”, “goddess with protective surface”, “ski-goddess”.

Skuld (proto-Nordic **Skuldi*): “debt”, “claim”. Norse name for Atropos.

Sleipnir (proto-Nordic **Slaipnijaz*): “glider”, “who flows”. Norse name for the Trojan horse.

Sól (proto-Nordic **Sowili*): “shining”, “Sun”. See Sunna.

Sunna (proto-Nordic **Sunþon*): “brilliant”, “bright”, “Sun”. Norse name for Helios and Hestia. Sunna is also known as Sol.

Svartr (proto-Nordic **Swartaz*): “black”.

T

Themis: “right”, “just”. Greek name for Týr.

Typhon: “whirlwind”. Greek name for Bölþorn.

Týr (proto-Nordic **Tiwaz*): “god,” “honour,” “esteem”, originally “beam of light”. Norse name for Ares, Themis, Uranos and Zeus. Also called Buri and Forseti.

P

Pjazi (proto-Nordic **Petsan*): “noisy”. See Bölþorn.

Pórr (proto-Nordic **Punaz*): “thunder”, “thunderstorm”. Norse name for Herakles and Zeus. Also called Vílir and Lóðurr.

Prýmr (proto-Nordic **Primaz*): “thunder”, originally “charge with noise”, “noise”, “turmoil”. See Bölþorn.

U

Ullr (proto-Nordic **Wulpaz*): “wool”, originally “surround”, “cover”. See Höðr.

Uranos: “heaven”. Greek name for Týr and Óðinn.

Urðr (proto-Nordic **Wurþijoz*): “esteem”, “honour”, “destiny”, “death” or “stones”. Norse name for the Lachesis.

V

Váli (proto-Nordic **Walan*): “selected” or “death”, “fallen”. Norse name for Herakles.

Vanadís (proto-Nordic **Wanadísijo*): “beautiful goddess”, originally “beautiful woman’s breast.” See Freyja.

Vei (proto-Nordic **Wíhan*): “holy”, “the one who separates”, or “the sacred”. See Freyr.

Veiði-ass (proto-Nordic **Waiþanansuz*): “hunting spirit”. See Skaði.

Verðandi (proto-Nordic **Wirþandin*): “the coming” or “recurring in a certain direction”. Norse name for Klotho.

Viðarr (proto-Nordic **Wíðanaz*): “forest”. Norse name for Pan. He is also called Elgr.

Vílir (proto-Nordic **Wílijaz*): “will”, “willpower”, “lust”, “state of mind”, “intent”, “mind”, “joy”, “order”. See Þórr.

Y

Yggdrasill (proto-Nordic **Ujjadraselaz*): “the one which demands reverence”, “the terrible horse.” See Heimdallr.

Ymir (proto-Nordic **Wumijaz*): “sound”, “howling”, “crying”. Also called Ánarr, Hymir and Ölvaldi.

Yngvinn (proto-Nordic **Ingwinuz*), abbreviated to Yngvi in the Viking Age: “friend of the meadow/field” or “working in the meadow/field”, later also “chief”, “king”. See Freyr.

Z

Zeus: “god”, originally “beam of light”. Greek name for the Týr and Þórr.

Æ

Ægir (proto-Nordic **Agijaz*): “scare”, “awe”. Norse name for Okeanos. Also called Gymir.

Ö

Ölvaldi (proto-Nordic **Alawaldaran*): “feast manager”. See Ymir.

Öndurgoð/Önduráss (proto-Nordic **Anduraguda*/**Anduransuz*): “procession-god/spirit”. See Skaði.